

**Yearbook: The Historical Society
of Fairfax County, Virginia, Inc.**

50th Anniversary Issue



Volume 27

1999-2000

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The Historical Society
of
Fairfax County, Virginia, Inc.
Volume 27
1999–2000**

Editors

Linda Dziobek and Edith Moore Sprouse

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Designed by Linda Dziobek and Mary Pat Rodenhouse

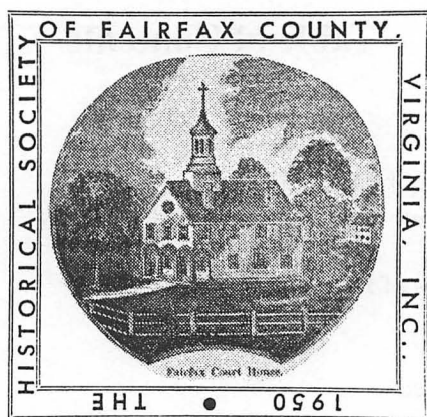
Front Cover: This portrait of a young woman, c. 1830, has been recently donated to the Historical Society by a descendant of the Smith and Gunnell families. If you can identify this mystery lady, please contact us at P.O. Box 415, Fairfax, VA 22030. Photograph by Jack L. Hiller.

Back Cover: Late summer in Hidden Pond Park photographed in September 1995 by Jack L. Hiller.

Articles in this journal are abstracted and indexed in HISTORICAL ABSTRACTS and AMERICA: HISTORY AND LIFE.

Table of Contents

Historical Societies of Fairfax County <i>Edith Moore Sprouse</i>	1
The <i>Hidden History</i> of Hidden Pond Park <i>Jack Lewis Hiller</i>	11
Keene's Mill Marked <i>Jack Lewis Hiller</i>	41
Commissioners of the Revenue, Fairfax County, Virginia: 1786 to Present <i>William Page Johnson II</i>	45
Lebanon Plantation: The Past on Pohick Creek <i>Edith Moore Sprouse</i>	59
"Old John": In Search of His Story <i>Jeanne Niccolls</i>	71
Ash Grove and the Sherman Family <i>Edith Moore Sprouse</i>	87
Officers and Directors of the Society	118
General Membership	120



Historical Societies of Fairfax County

by
Edith Moore Sprouse

Just as the turn of the century marks a new millennium, so also does it commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the present Historical Society of Fairfax County and this twenty-seventh volume of its *Yearbook*.

On February 18, 1950, J.W. Rixey Smith and some thirty interested citizens met, appropriately enough at Woodlawn Plantation, to establish a society which would "collect and preserve data, letters, and objects of interest pertaining to the history of Fairfax County and northern Virginia." They were not, however, pioneers in this endeavor. Although the statewide Virginia Historical Society had been organized in Richmond in 1831, northern Virginia's first known venture was in 1878, instigated by a group of New Jersey Quakers who had settled in the Woodlawn neighborhood some thirty years before.

Fairfax County Historical Society
[Reported for the *Alexandria Gazette*]

Pursuant to public notice, a number of the citizens of Fairfax county assembled at the house of Charles Ballinger, near Collingwood, on Saturday last, January 12th, for the purpose of organizing a County Historical Society.

Eben Mason, of Woodlawn, was chosen President and W.H. Snowden, of Collingwood, chosen Secretary. The President, on taking the chair, stated that the object of the organization was to encourage among our people a deeper interest for the collection and preservation of the many valuable fragments, both written and traditional, relating to times past of our immediate region, otherwise liable to be irretrievably lost.

A committee of five, consisting of Eben Mason, W.H. Snowden, John Ballinger, Wm. Hunter, jr., and Warrington Gillingham, was chosen to prepare suitable regulations for the government of the association and to report at next meeting.

The society contemplates holding regular monthly meetings at some convenient place, hereafter to be determined, and the cordial cooperation of all persons having an interest in its objects is earnestly desired.

Documents of every description__old manuscripts, letters, journals, genealogical records, maps, drawings, pictures, &c., having a general historical interest, are solicited, which, when received by the society, will be duly noticed or published in its monthly transactions, and if offered as permanent donations will be carefully deposited and preserved in some public place, safe from destruction, and always accessible to the public under the society's directions; and it is believed that with a hearty co operation of everybody in the least imbued with an antiquarian spirit, a collection of matter can be made in a very few years of exceeding great value to future historians and annalists.

Lying neglected among the rubbish of garrets, lofts, offices, counting rooms, and store houses in old desks, boxes, trunks and barrels throughout our county, liable at any time to be destroyed by fire, are no doubt vast stores of historical materials, which their possessors, actuated by patriotism and a love of "olden time memories," would doubtless willingly contribute for preservation in such a collection as that now contemplated by the founders of this society, who confidently look forward to the time when the properly directed energies of the inhabitants of all our region of country, representing every useful industry, shall make possible in the old "city of Alexandria," the establishment of a "grand museum," richly representing the great departments of agriculture, mechanics, fine arts, anatomy, mineralogy, geology, paleontology, history, geography and other kindred sciences. A museum, that would daily offer to the inquirer in all these provinces of useful knowledge, wholesome information in a most convenient and attractive way, and luring the rising generation from the poisoning influences of theatres, traveling shows, circuses and other places, elevate their thoughts to objects of high import and lead them into paths of real advantage to themselves and to society at large.

All persons who have a common interest in the promotion of the objects as above set forth are hereby requested to commence at once the work of collecting available materials, and to communicate with the "society" through the secretary.

The next meeting will be held incidentally with the next monthly meeting of the Woodlawn Farmer's Club, Saturday, February 16th, at the house of Samuel Pullman.¹

W.H. SNOWDEN, Secretary.

Whether this initial attempt succeeded is not known. Neither the Woodlawn archives nor the Farmers Club manuscripts in the Alexandria Library contain any further record of the proposed organization.

Another isolated instance of historical activity was featured nearly twenty years later in the August 9, 1897 issue of the *Gazette*. Residents of both communities attended the first annual historic picnic sponsored by the Prince William County Educational Association. M.D. Hall, school superintendent of Fairfax County, presided, while William H. Snowden of Fairfax and George C. Round of Prince William were the speakers. Held on the banks of the Occoquan, the site of the vanished town of Colchester, the gathering was "designed to encourage the present generation to study the past."

In Fairfax County, on Washington's birthday in 1910, the Fairfax Historical Society was organized, with Columbus Choate of Herndon as its President. He had recently produced a historical map of the county, the first since G.M. Hopkins had published his *Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington* in 1879. Captain S.R. Donohoe, publisher of the *Fairfax Herald*, was chosen as one of six Vice-Presidents. Two ladies from Vienna were among the officers. Mrs. Mary Stephens Rippey became the Secretary-treasurer and Mrs. John W. Echols served on the Executive committee. The purpose of the organization, set forth in its constitution, was "the study and preservation of the history and annals of Fairfax County and its people."

A list of charter members has been made available by Mayo Stuntz, whose father served as secretary of the Society:

John S. Barbour	Fairfax	Rev. Everard Meade	Accotink
M/M Edwin S. Bethel	Vienna	R. Walton Moore	Fairfax
M/M C.D. Choate	Herndon	Miss Jenny Moore	Fairfax
M.E. Church	Falls Church	Miss Margaret Moore	Fairfax
Dr. A.G. Coombe	Vienna	Dr. F. Noble	Herndon
M/M J.W. Echols	Vienna	F.W. Richardson	Fairfax
C.V. Ford	Fairfax	M/M Charles M. Rippey	Vienna
Rev. E.L. Goodwin	Ashland, Va.	James W. Roberts	Alex.
Miss Mary F. Goodwin	Ashland, Va.	Anna M. Roberts	Alex.
M/M M.D. Hall	Burke	Dr./Mrs. E.L. Robey	Herndon
Harvey E. Hanes	Herndon	J.W. Rust	Fairfax
Mrs. A.D. Hine	Vienna	H.A. Sagar	Herndon
Charles Hine	Vienna	Capt./Mrs. Frank Sherman	McLean
E. Hilton Jackson	Herndon	S.C. Stuntz	Vienna
M/M Thomas R. Keith	Fairfax	R.E. Thronton	Fairfax
Judge J.M. Love	Fairfax	James Westcott	Vienna
Miss Mary Lukens	Accotink	Robert Wiley	Fairfax
Russell Lynn	Herndon	J.C.L. Wilson	Vienna

The first annual meeting was held on July 4, 1911. New members were

J. Russell Alden	Washington	W.W. Long	Fairfax
M/M Joseph Berry	Vienna	Miss Lillian Millan	Fairfax
Rev./Mrs. R.C. Drisco	Herndon	Miss Mary C. Millan	R.F.D.1
Mrs. E.H. Jackson	Herndon	W.F. Oliver	Fairfax
Paul Kester	Gunston Hall	Mrs. Fanklin Williams	Fairfax
Robt. E. Lee, Jr.	Burke	Franklin Williams, Jr.	Vienna
Mr. Darlington 1911/1912			

Among the goals of the Society was the publication of a quarterly journal. Erecting historical markers, photographing historic houses, and writing a county history were other projects proposed which would not be acted upon for another half century.²

There seemed, however, to have been no further activity on the part of the society until 1915. On February 26th of that year the *Fairfax Herald* reported that the group had resumed activities. Meeting in Vienna, "Delightful refreshments were served by Mrs. Echols," and new officers were elected. Mrs. John S. Barbour of Fairfax, Mrs. J.M. Des Rochers and Mrs. T.C. Quick of Falls Church and Professor Arnold Stone of Centreville joined the Society. S.C. Stuntz of Vienna, the new Secretary-treasurer, had the foresight to keep the minutes; they were published by his son Mayo, editor of Volume 13 (1973–1975) of the *Yearbook*. The Society seems to have been disbanded sometime after its last recorded meeting (on Washington's birthday, 1917). The senior Mr. Stuntz died a year later.

Two World Wars intervened before the present Historical Society was formed on February 18, 1950. A handful of members from the 1910 society joined the new organization, among them John S. Barbour, James M. Love, Miss Lillian Millan, Miss Margaret Moore, and Mrs. Walter T. Oliver. Its purpose remained similar to that of its predecessors—"collecting and preserving data and objects of interest pertaining to the history of Fairfax County and Norther Virginia." They met at Woodlawn on the very day that the first pieces of furniture belonging to its original owners, Nellie Custis and her husband Lawrence Lewis, were returned to that historic house. J.W. Rixey Smith was chosen as President pro tem, Thatcher Paris as Secretary, and Mrs. Edmund Parry, Treasurer. Permanent officers were elected in July, with Col. Henry Eglin as President, Charles Pickett and Thatcher Paris, Vice-presidents, and James Keith as Secretary. The new organization had ambitious goals. One of their immediate objectives was to become

Historical Society Reorganized.

The Fairfax Historical Society met at the residence of Mrs. Alma D. Hine, at Vienna, on Monday last, with Mr. C. D. Choate, the president, presiding, and Mrs. C. M. Rippey acting as secretary. Mr. Choate gave an account of the work done since the society was organized. New officers were elected as follows: Col. R. E. Lee, Jr., president; Mr. S. C. Stuntz, of Vienna, secretary and treasurer. Executive Committee: Mrs. T. C. Quick, of Falls Church; Mrs. T. R. Keith, of Fairfax, and Mr. C. D. Choate, of Herndon. The vice-presidents are to be appointed by the executive committee. Short speeches were made by Mr. Choate, Col. Lee, Mr. Thos. R. Keith, Rev. Dr. Frank Page and Mr. J. W. Echols. Delightful refreshments were served by Mrs. Echols. The regular meetings of the society will be held on February 22d and July 4th of each year.

Fairfax Herald, *February 16, 1915, p. 3.*

an affiliate of the Virginia Historical Society, which would require opening an office, appointing a full-time director, setting up a library and archive, and publishing a yearbook. Thatcher Paris offered to act as director, and an office was set up in the Barbour building on Main Street in the town of Fairfax. Except for the month of August, it was to be open from 9:00 to 4:30 daily, and until 12:30 on Saturdays.

The charter of the new society was approved by the Virginia organization and Fairfax County became their first affiliate group. During the first year an educational program was started in the schools. An Heirloom Show and House Tour was held in November in Fairfax. The *Providence Journal* stated on December 14, 1950 that "Thatcher Paris has been talking to a number of schools on the history of Fairfax County...the Society will furnish a speaker to any organization or school that request such a program." Tours of county historic sites were also given for teachers at Fairfax High School.

HEIRLOOM SHOW

The Heirloom Show given under the auspices of the Historical Society of Fairfax County, Virginia, Inc., is the first such show to be given in northern Virginia. The exhibits consisting of silver, glass, china, quilts, coverlets, pottery, manuscripts, portraits, miniatures and many miscellaneous items are heirlooms of the people of this county and northern Virginia.

Directions—Truro Episcopal Parish Hall—one block from Fairfax Courthouse on Little River Turnpike.

TRURO RECTORY

The Rectory of Truro Episcopal Church built in the early Nineteenth Century was one of the first houses to be built in the present Town of Fairfax is noted for the fine Georgian woodwork, original mantels and floors.

It was in this house that Captain John S. Mosby captured the Yankee Brigadier General Edwin H. Stoughton on the night of March 8, 1863. Captain Mosby in his report to Major General J. E. B. Stuart writes, "The fruits of this expedition are 1 brigadier general, 2 captains, and 30 men-prisoners. We also brought off 58 horses . . . and a considerable number of arms." The house is now occupied by Mr. Raymond Davis, rector of the church.

Directions—Across the green from Truro Parish Hall.

FAIRFAX COURTHOUSE

The Courthouse, a red brick rectangle with gabled roof, arcaded loggia and a cupola was built in 1800 on two acres of land acquired from Richard Ratcliffe in 1799. The village grew up around the Courthouse and on January 14, 1805, the General Assembly of Virginia passed an act establishing the Town of Providence. February 16, 1892, the village became incorporated as the Town of Fairfax, by act of the General Assembly.

The Courthouse is noted for the fine collection of portraits of early Fairfax men. The wills of General and Mrs. Washington and George Mason, Esq., will be on exhibit.

Directions—Intersection of Route 123 and Little River Turnpike.

HOME OF MRS. WALTER T. OLIVER

The first part of this interesting old house was built around 1800 with the main section being added in 1832. The house is noteworthy for its very fine stairway and mantels. It was in this house that former Governor Smith and Colonel Ewell were staying on June 1, 1861, when the Yankees killed Captain John Marr. Captain Marr was the first Confederate soldier killed in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The house has been occupied by the Oliver family since 1897.

Directions—Opposite the Courthouse green.

HOME OF MRS. CHARLES POZER

The oldest house in the present Town of Fairfax, it was built before 1742. Before the Town of Providence was incorporated the settlement was known as Erp's Corners and this house was used as an ordinary. This ordinary is the only house in the present village where it has been proven that George Washington stayed while on early surveying trips. While the house was being restored, Revolutionary War shoe buckles were found in the cellar.

Directions—Main Street of Fairfax, 2 blocks from Courthouse.

SWALLOW BARN

A restored Nineteenth Century farmhouse now the home of Mrs. Thatcher Paris. Directions—Approximately 3 blocks from Courthouse on Route 123 toward Vienna.

M. THATCHER PARIS, Director

HEIRLOOM SHOW AND TOUR OF HISTORIC HOUSES

FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

Sponsored by the Historical Society of Fairfax County,
Virginia, Inc.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1950

12:00 to 6:00 P. M.

TEA, 3:00 to 6:00 P. M.

PATRONS

Mrs. Charles Pozer
Judge and Mrs. Charles Hamel
Mr. and Mrs. Lisle Smith
Mr. and Mrs. Smith Bowman
Mrs. Walter Tansill Oliver
Mr. Raymond Davis
Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Wall
Mr. Rixey Smith
Senator and Mrs. John W. Rust
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Barringer
Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey Graves
Mr. and Mrs. Craig Hunter
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Pickett

Justice and Mrs. Robert Jackson
Mr. and Mrs. F. D. Richardson
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Graham
Mr. and Mrs. M. Thatcher Paris
Mrs. F. S. McCandlish
Mr. and Mrs. John S. Barbour
Mr. and Mrs. Richard M. Smith
Mr. and Mrs. John Brookfield
Mr. and Mrs. Thurmond Arnold
Judge and Mrs. Paul Brown
Mr. and Mrs. John Mackall
Dr. and Mrs. Charles Howze
Mr. and Mrs. Edmond Parry

On March 30, 1951, the editor of the *Fairfax Herald* praised these efforts:

Although its work is not attended with any great amount of fanfare the County Historical Society which recently marked its first birthday is performing a highly worthwhile service in its attempts to preserve the memorials of our county's historic heritages. The kaleidoscopic changes which are taking place in our daily lives tend to obscure our truly historic past. If local history were an item of bargain and sale there are many communities in other parts of the country, which would gladly pay a good price for even a fraction of Fairfax County's historic interest—not indeed as a matter of sentiment, but purely as business investment. Local history tends to be forgotten, especially as the older citizens pass away. The group of citizens who make up the County Historical Society deserve commendation for their efforts to preserve the fast disappearing records of our county's past.

And on March 21, 1951, the *Fairfax Herald* carried this item:

Historical Society Asks Information About Family Portraits

The County Historical Society is seeking to compile a list of all oil paintings and miniatures now in the county [*sic*] of persons born before 1850, regardless of whether the subject of the painting was a resident of Fairfax County or not. The only requirements are that the portrait is now in the possession of someone living in the county, and the subject of the portrait was born before 1850. All county residents who have such portraits are asked to notify the society at its headquarters in Fairfax. The list will be published in the society's yearbook, and it is probable that arrangements will also be made to photograph each portrait.

Their goal of getting the fifteen hundred members necessary in order to support the projected budget and activities of the society was, unfortunately, never attained. Membership never increased substantially over two hundred, and by June 1951 the director reported ruefully that public interest did not exist and there was no money for the yearbook. Paris resigned, but was persuaded to stay on for a year as an unpaid part-time director.³ The first volume of the *Yearbook*, however, was able to be published in 1951. These journals have become the most visible contributions of the Society.

Subsequent volumes did not report the activities of the Society until 1961, when President Richard McAllister Smith reported their sponsorship of the Red Cross ceremony at Fairfax Station honoring Clara Barton and the Civil War Centennial commemoration of the death of Captain

John Q. Marr. They had arranged for the return of several early court records, taken during the Civil War. Legislative efforts to protect the view of the Potomac shoreline across from Mount Vernon were supported by the society.⁴

The eighth *Yearbook* (1962–1963), commemorating the Civil War Centennial, departed from the format of individual articles to present two civilian journals written by Fairfax residents. The next volume focused on the Mount Vernon neighborhood. In 1971–1973, Volume 12 anticipated the Bicentennial of the Revolution by transcribing the records of the county court from April 1770 to January 1772. The court minute books are missing through June 1783, and are thought to have been lost or destroyed when the Court House was occupied by both armies during the Civil War. Subsequently, the Minute Book for 1772–1774 was returned to the Virginia State Library. Volume 12 was the most recent issue of the yearbook to be centered on a specific theme.

Over the years the Fairfax County Society has held semiannual meetings at historic sites, sponsored essay contests for high school students, acquired manuscripts for the Virginia Collection of the Fairfax City Regional Library, contributed funds toward the Library's digitizing program, and endeavored in many ways to discover and preserve the history of Fairfax County. The Society's most important contribution, however, will undoubtedly be the information contained in this series, ongoing since 1950, of the *Yearbook of the Historical Society of Fairfax County, Virginia, Inc.*

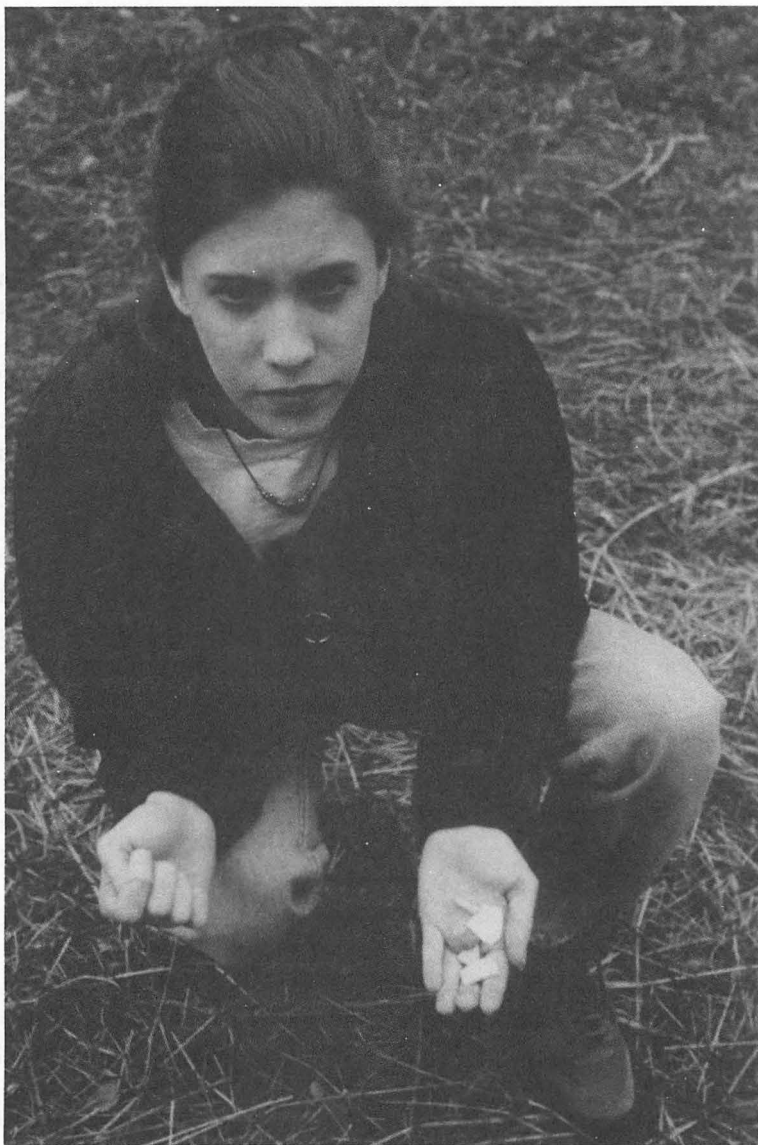
Notes

¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 15, 1878.

² "Minutes of the Meetings of the Fairfax Historical Society 1910–1917." *Yearbook: Historical Society of Fairfax County, Virginia, Inc.*, 13(1973–1975):68–78.

³ "Activities of the Historical Society" and "Minutes of the Meetings of the Historical Society of Fairfax County, Virginia, Inc." *Ibid.*, 1(1950–1951):3,62–74.

⁴ "President's Report," "Treasurer's Report." *Ibid.*, 7(1960–1961):55, 56.



Meredith Townes holds the artifacts she found in 1992, when she was 11 years old. Her understanding of the significance of the artifacts initiated historical and archaeological research into Hidden Pond Park's hidden history. Meredith was fifteen years old when Jack L. Hiller took this photograph.

The Hidden History of Hidden Pond Park

by
Jack Lewis Hiller

Mr. Hiller is a technical adviser to Friends of Historic Huntley. He co-founded and developed the Fairfax County Public School's archaeology program for secondary students and was nominated in 1984 as "Teacher of the Year" from Groveton High School. He is chairman of the Historical Marker Committee of the Fairfax County History Commission and has also been a consultant to the Education Director of the American Institute of Architects. In 1980 he was selected as "Outstanding Teacher-Historian" by the United States Capitol Historical Society. He is a noteworthy freelance photojournalist and has produced a portrait of Martin Luther King, Jr., which was acquired by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in 1968.

*I*t was a hot, humid August day in 1992. The heavy air was filled with the talk and laughter of children mixed with the sound of rustling leaves and snapping twigs as they moved into the underbrush. Mike McCaffrey, the Program Director at Hidden Pond Park in West Springfield, had organized a mock archaeological dig for about twenty-five fourth, fifth and sixth grade students. McCaffrey wanted to demonstrate that the earth might hold secrets of the past. He had no idea, however, just how many secrets this earth actually held.

In preparation Mike had consulted with Valerie Townes, a mother of one of the students and a volunteer naturalist within the park. Valerie had gained archaeological experience through courses given by Fairfax County and by volunteer work at Mt. Vernon. She provided Mike with a sense of the tools and procedures he might follow to make the dig feel authentic. So that the students would not get discouraged Mike decided to "salt the dig" with a few old nails placed at a preselected site about seventy feet north of the park office house.

The group of twenty five was broken up into subgroups of four or five young people. Each person had a trowel and each group had a wire mesh screen into which the excavated dirt was to be placed and shaken in search

of artifacts. Older students were selected to supervise the groups. Valerie's daughter, Meredith Townes, then only 11 years old, was chosen to help supervise a group because of her experience observing her mother's work excavating sites and doing lab work at Mt. Vernon.

In a matter of minutes some of the students, much to their delight, began finding things. But they were not nails. Instead, they found shards of ceramic material. Meredith had seen things like that before. They looked suspiciously like objects her mother had tried to piece together in the Mt. Vernon archaeology lab.

Meredith approached McCaffrey and asked if he had planted in the ground the objects she showed him. Mike's response was that he had never seen them before that moment. At this point the young girl became alarmed and warned her instructor that he should call off the dig. Demonstrating wisdom far beyond her years, she explained that these were real artifacts and they had to be protected from random excavation.

What the students found were: a round white clay tobacco pipe stem less than an inch long; three small pieces of pearlware, manufactured in England between approximately 1780 and 1830; a piece of gray salt-glazed stoneware with cobalt blue markings that looked like those produced in 19th century Alexandria, and a piece of brown earthenware. What was the origin of these shards from the past?

Documentary and subsequent archaeological research made it possible to compile a chain of title that related to the artifacts found on the site. But more than that, it became possible to get a glimpse of the long forgotten, unheralded lives of the people who touched this ground over the past two centuries.

The record they left provides a source of insight into a middle class whose values were shaped by socio-economic conditions that differed from our own. The history of this parcel of land also chronicles the evolving patterns of land usage, value, and acreage as Fairfax County changed from over 200 years as a rural community into a post-World War II suburban community.

Nineteen people owned this land before it became a park. At least nine of those owners lived in a house that once stood on the property. The earliest were pioneers along the Pohick Creek section of Springfield in Fairfax County. Almost all of the 18th and 19th century owners were farmers whose lives were linked in one way or another to the commercial centers of Alexandria and the-no-longer-existing Colchester.

The Barker Family

The first owner, William Barker, acquired the land eight years before there was an Alexandria and almost a year before there was a Fairfax County. Barker was granted 287 acres in 1741¹ by William Fairfax (Figure 1), land agent for Thomas, 6th Lord Fairfax—the proprietor of 5,282,000 acres stretching between the Rappahannock River on the south, the Potomac River on the east and north, to the headwaters of the Potomac on the west. About Barker, Beth Mitchell writes:

William Barker voted in 1744, 1765, and 1768. He was on the rent rolls 1761–1772 for 285 acres. In 1774 he is charged for 237 acres. His will was dated 9 March 1795 and probated 21 January 1800; mentioned were sons Leonard, William, heirs of son Moses, deceased, John, deceased, Mary Smithiman, Ann Deavers, and Sarah Gray.²

It is not clear from where William Barker came. He may have been related to Leonard Barker who was appointed by Lieutenant Governor Sir William Gooch as Justice of the Peace for Prince William County “in 1731 when the law creating that county went into effect.”³ William’s son, Leonard, who acquired the “Mansion house” in 1797, may have been a namesake. The first Leonard Barker from Stafford County was actively involved in land transactions along Powell’s Creek from 1724 in what would become Prince William County.⁴ His appointment as Justice of the Peace made him a member of the county government.

Two very different motives drove men to acquire land in the newly created (1742) Fairfax County. Some men were land speculators whose intention was to sell or lease for a profit. That was the intention of William Fitzhugh whose very early acquisition in 1685 of 21,996 acres occupied eight and three quarters percent of the land in the center of the country.⁵

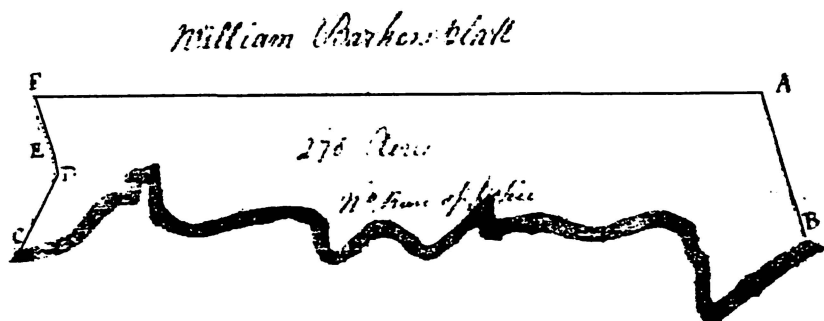


Figure 1. The original plat of land granted to William Barker by William Fairfax in 1741. (Source: NN E:358)

Around the edge of Fitzhugh's "Ravensworth" smaller grants of under 100 to over 1,000 acres filled the remaining land surface by the end of the 18th century.

William Barker's 287 acres were located between the southwest border of Fitzhugh's line and Pohick Creek (Figure 2). He, apparently, was a subsistence farmer rather than a land speculator. There is no evidence he had a large number of slaves although, he did have a "Negro lad Fairfax."⁶ He raised and sold fruit;⁷ and, according to the Ledger kept at Mt. Vernon, he had 43 bushels of wheat ground at Washington's mill in February 1782,⁸ indicating it was probably the closest mill at that time. He also had a whiskey still which he willed to the "equal use" of his son and two daughters.

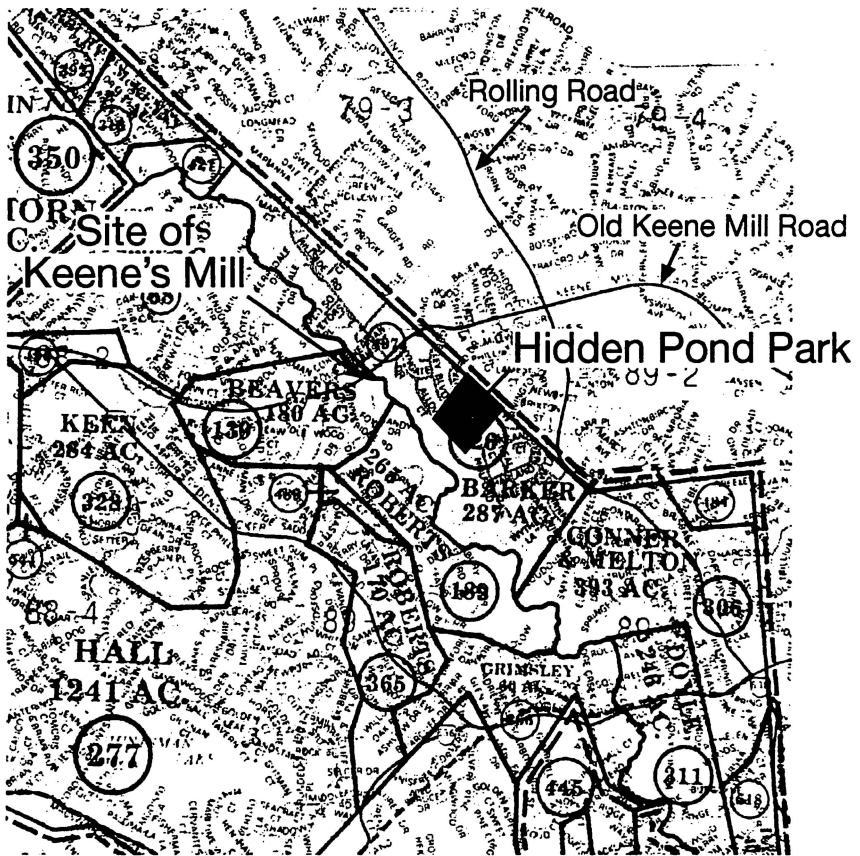


Figure 2. Barker's 1741 land grant superimposed on a modern map of Fairfax County showing the location of Hidden Pond Park. (Source: Mitchell, 1979)

An inventory of Barker's property filed with the court in February 1801 suggests he operated a small diversified farm. He had one mare, one cow and calf, one red heifer, a brindle steer, five pigs, and a small quantity of wheat, rye, oats and corn. He also had two linen wheels indicating that he raised flax from which to make cloth.⁹ He probably sold excess fruits and grains in Colchester or Alexandria.

In April 1793, William and his wife, Mary, sold the northern 100 of their 287 acres to their son, William Jr., and grandson, Presley.¹⁰ This land was on the north side of the present-day Old Keene Mill Road. The deed referred to the original land grant where William, Sr., "now lives and hath lived nearly or ever since the time of the said grant." Thus it appears that William, Sr., actually occupied the land he acquired at an early date and continued to reside on the remaining 187 acres until his death in late 1799. His will was probated on 21 January 1800.¹¹

In December 1799, William, Jr., signed an agreement with his neighbors, James and William Keene, whose land occupied the west side of Pohick Creek. For the sum of \$500 Barker agreed to allow James Keene to raise his mill dam on Pohick Creek two feet and thus flood a portion of Barker's land.¹² In the years ahead Presley, William, Jr.'s son, expanded this property by acquiring Ravensworth land from William and Anna Maria Fitzhugh increasing his holdings from Pohick Creek on the west to Rolling Road on the east.¹³

After 1793 the remaining 187 acres of William, Sr.'s, original grant occupied an area within the modern boundaries of Old Keene Mill Road on the north, Pohick Creek on the west, the eastern line of Hidden Pond Park (which was the original Ravensworth line extended to Old Keene Mill Road) and a southern boundary in the Rolling Valley development (see Figure 2).

Leonard Barker acquired the 187 acres by deed, a gift from his father, in 1787 with the guarantee that William, Sr., could continue to have "full and free use" thereof.¹⁴ A portion of this land was to be given to Leonard's sisters, "Barbary" [*sic*] and Nancy, upon the death of their father.

Both generations of Barkers were probably oriented more toward the closer tobacco port of Colchester than to Alexandria. All of the roads in the Pohick and Accotink Creek section of the county—Ox Road, Pohick Road, Rolling Road and Backlick Road—ran southeast along the high ground between creeks toward Mason Neck and Colchester, located on Occoquan Creek, with access to the Potomac River. Leonard owned a one half acre lot in Colchester from 1805 to 1808.¹⁵

To get to Alexandria from Barker's land in the mid 18th century one would have to travel southeast on Pohick Road to the Colchester–Alexandria Road (approximately where Old Telegraph Road is today), then go northeast toward Alexandria.¹⁶ The distance to Alexandria was almost twenty miles via this route, while it was approximately thirteen miles to Colchester.

Leonard Barker died intestate in 1831. The inventory of his property made at that time shows he had continued to farm the land. He had 21 pigs, 20 sheep, 3 mares, 1 colt, 3 “calfs” [*sic*], 1 small steer, and a “white faced Buaffaloe” [*sic*]. He raised tobacco and kept bees. He also had a supply of wheat straw, rye straw, oat straw, flax and corn on hand.¹⁷ Like his father and many other farmers in Fairfax County, Leonard operated a diversified farm rather than a tobacco plantation.¹⁸

Diversified farming does not require the large labor force that tobacco farming does. Again, like his father, Leonard had just one slave, Tom, who is listed in his inventory. A Fairfax County Personal Property tax taken in 1815 lists Leonard and his sister Barbara as having two slaves over the age of 12.¹⁹ In an 1835 chancery case²⁰ in which the heirs sued Barker's administrator, Leonard's slave “Tom” was again mentioned. Leonard's estate settlement shows that “Jane, a free Negro” was paid \$2.39 for her services.²¹ When the Barkers needed labor beyond the services of a permanent handy man they could rent local slaves or hire free blacks.

The whiskey still in Leonard Barker's estate, presumably inherited from his father, was purchased by his son, John W. Barker, for \$15.00. John Barker apparently made good use of it. He had a reputation as a “poor inebriate” in the community according to a statement made by his own brother in 1857.²²

A survey of Leonard Barker's property was made by commissioners appointed by the court in March 1838. His holdings had expanded to 232 acres which were now subdivided among two of his five children and two grandchildren. The lines of that subdivision extend into the surrounding modern communities of Rolling Valley and Orange Hunt where they are preserved to this day (Figures 3 and 4).

Lot 2, which includes the land that will ultimately become part of the community of Keene Mill Station (1968) and Hidden Pond Park (1973), became the property of Leonard's daughter, Catharine in 1838.²³ This lot also included the “Mansion house.” She was the last Barker to own the land acquired by her grandfather from the Northern Neck Proprietary in 1741. It was now reduced to 116 acres. Upon Catharine's death the Sutherland's purchased the house and property in 1851.²⁴

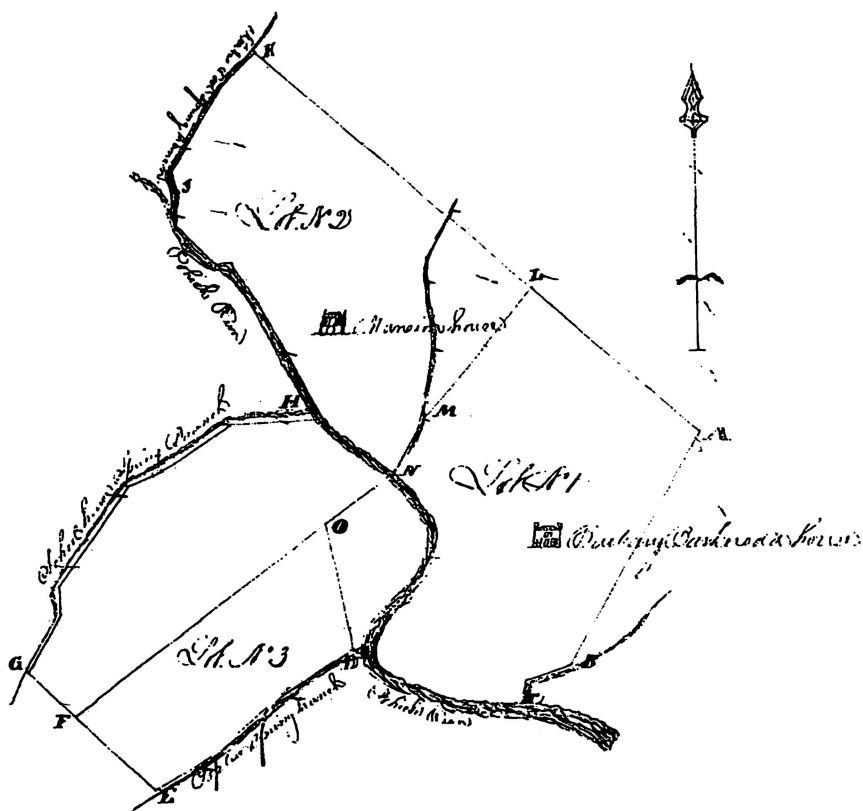


Figure 3. A plat showing the division of Leonard Barker's property in 1838.
(Source: DBE3:394)

The Sutherland Family

John Sutherland and his brother William owned Keene's Mill from 1838 to 1849.²⁵ The saw and grist mill was located on the west side of Pohick Creek opposite Presley Barker's land. The Barkers benefited from the proximity of the mill and permitted the mill pond to flood a portion of their property in 1799. The mill was built sometime between 1796, when James Keene acquired from the state six acres needed to create a pond,²⁶ and 1799, when he expanded the pond.²⁷

The Sutherland brothers purchased the mill in March 1838, at public auction for \$800 from the estate of their father-in-law, Archibald Hall (the Sutherland brothers were married to Hall's daughters), and his partner, Presley Barker. Barker and Hall, in turn, had purchased it earlier in 1836 from the estate of James Keene, son of the man who built the mill. Hall

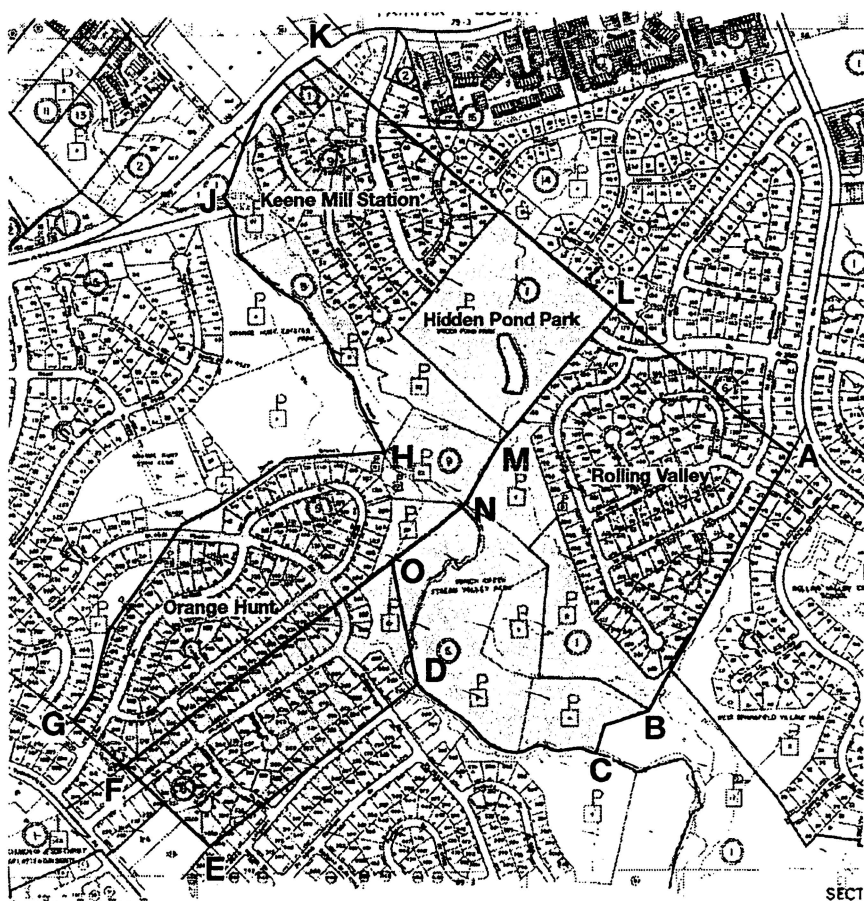


Figure 4. The 1838 plat showing the division of Leonard Barker's property superimposed on a 1984 map, including Hidden Pond Park in the center and the communities of Keene Mill Station at the top, Rolling Valley on the right, and Orange Hunt on the left. Note: line A—L—K is the original Ravensworth-Barker property line.

died before he could actually occupy the mill and apparently Barker, probably just a financial backer, did not want to operate it by himself.²⁸

John Sutherland was married to Maria Hall. In 1850 they had five children ranging in age from three months to thirteen years according to the census of that year.²⁹ He was a farmer. They occupied the Barker house just six years. James C. Denty loaned John and Maria the money to purchase the land, but John's death in 1854 "by excess drinking"³⁰ must have made it impossible to pay off the note. The land had to be resold.

However, before it was resold Maria Sutherland's house was the scene of a bloody death, in 1855, brought on by a feud among drinking friends

and a brawl. Lewis Q. Hall, one of her relatives, died on 29 October after staggering to the house two days earlier with the help of John W. Barker. Hall had been stabbed at Keene's mill on the other side of the creek, and Barker was a witness and participant in initiating the brawl. One day after the death a coroner's inquest was held at the house, and Dr. John Rose described to the jury what he found when he arrived on the scene:

I found the intestines wounded, the knife had passed through one side of the intestine, and found the orifice to one wound—I wanted assistance to put the intestine [back], all seemed frightened. I could not get assistance from them—Doct. Hollister came when I was in the act of tying the intestine, but the patient would not submit. I succeeded in getting a part returned, but I found I could not get all back unless opening the wound larger. The man was in a sinking condition, but in his senses. They sent for Doct. Nevett. I then on the next day with Doct. Nevett, succeeded in returning the intestine. I have no hesitation in saying his death was occasioned by the wound. It was on Saturday he was cut, on Monday he died. On Sunday morning the intestines were out about a yard in length—I suppose the intestine that was perforated was the one nearest the abdomen.³¹

William H. Keene, the proprietor of the mill, was indicted for the murder. Keene was arrested, held in jail for one year, escaped once, tried and condemned to hang. But Governor Henry A. Wise, convinced that Hall's death resulted from a drunken brawl rather than an act of premeditation, commuted the sentence to ten years in the state prison. What finally happened to Keene is not known because all of the prison records were lost during the Civil War.³²

Thomas Hall

In 1852, Thomas Hall bought the 116 acres at a court house auction for \$377.³³ Not much is known about Hall. He probably was related to Maria Hall Sutherland. He may have let her continue to live on the farm; but, if so, only for two years when he resold the land.

John and Mary Rose

John Rose, M.D., and Mary, his wife, bought the property on 1 January 1859.³⁴ Dr. Rose was certainly familiar with the house. He was one of three physicians called to attend to Lewis Q. Hall who gave the deposition cited above. The Roses held the property for only six months. Sometime between 24 March, when John wrote his will, and 18 April, when the will was probated, John Rose died.³⁵ Mary McClintock Rose sold what was

now reduced to 100 acres to John Masten in exchange for \$1.00 and a house and lot in Alexandria.³⁶

John Masten

The man who owned the farm during the Civil War was John Masten. The records concerning John Masten are confused. The index to the 1860 census for Alexandria lists a John Martin but does not mention a John Masten. Neither does the Fairfax Census. Close inspection of the actual Alexandria census page shows the name to be John Mastin; the *s* in Mastin could easily be read as *r* in the small hand of the census taker. The entry shows that Mastin was 56 and employed as a sailor. Living in the house with him is Sally, 24; Mary, 17; Jack, 15; Virginia, 11; Billy, 8; James, 5; and Helen, 2.³⁷

Supporting the assumption that John Martin is really John Mastin is an entry in another index: "Alexandria County (Arlington), Virginia, Marriage Records, 1835–1895." This index spells the name *Maston*, and shows on 9 February 1858, a 53-year-old sailor from Westmoreland County married a Sally Adams, 23, also from Westmoreland County while they were in Alexandria County, which is Arlington County today.³⁸

If both records are referring to the same man it would appear that John Masten (the spelling on the deed) already had a family and married a woman 30 years his junior to replace an absent wife. The age and occupation listed on both records fit. The census should list Sally as being 26 instead of 24, but mistakes like that are not unusual.

As the decade moved to a close Masten made another change in his life. On 24 June 1859 he traded Mrs. John Rose a house and lot in Alexandria for her farm on Pohick Creek. Fairfax Land Tax Records show that he occupied the farm from 1861, the first year he paid taxes, until 1869.³⁹ The clerk that made this record also changed Masten's name to Martin for the years 1868 and 1869. But there is no deed and no record of a John Martin ever owning the land. The farm was sold in the spring of 1870 as part of John Masten's estate. He left no will.

The Young Family

Albert Young bought the land on 4 March 1870,⁴⁰ and eight years later deeded it to his nine children along with a house on Cameron Street in Alexandria.⁴¹ Hattie Amelia Young was only thirteen when she became part owner of the house and farm. Like most of her siblings she grew up, married and moved away. But her sister Emma never married and stayed on the farm with her father, who died in December 1905.

In the meantime two sisters—Alice Louise Huntington and Mary Julia Dodson—occupied the Alexandria property where they took in boarders. Emma also rented out a small tenement house her father built on the farm in the 1880s.

Hattie Young Dawson did not like this arrangement. She was part owner of two pieces of property that were earning income, but she was not receiving a share of it. So she sued her three sisters in 1906 demanding that the court force them to sell the property and divide the money among all the siblings.⁴² The court agreed and appointed R.E. Thornton and Thomas R. Keith as special commissioners to sell the property.

During the trial Hattie Dawson gave testimony about the structures that were on the land. This testimony gives us the earliest descriptions of those buildings. She described the “old house” as being “a story and a half,” and she described the addition her father built as being “two stories.” The questioner suggested that her father built the new addition in the fall and early winter of 1878, but she responded: “I can not give no dates.” She confirmed that a new stable with granary had been built between 1890 and 1900 replacing an older one that functioned well enough to hold “two head of horses and twenty head of cattle” before it was replaced. Her testimony also established an approximate date for the “tenement house” (between 1878 and 1890).

The court ordered an advertisement be placed in a local newspaper and posters be put up advertising a public auction. The poster broadcast in bold letters the sale date as “Friday, the 28th day of December, 1906” (Figure 5). The property was described as having:

Two Small Frame Dwelling Houses, stable, etc., and is well watered in every field. Most of the land is enclosed by a substantial wire fence, and there is a good orchard upon it.

The Farm was purchased by L.A. Denty for \$1,000.⁴³ He was the grandson of James C. Denty, trustee for the same property in 1851.⁴⁴ L.A. Denty held the farm for three years. He may have let Emma Young continue to live on it while he farmed it. At any rate, he sold the land to her on 30 June 1909.⁴⁵ She “paid in full the purchase money,” which was probably what Denty had paid for it. Emma lived on what had been her father’s farm until her death in 1920.

Now the farm returned to the Young siblings, still living, and their children as the heirs of Emma Young. This is the same situation that existed in 1906 when Hattie Young Dawson brought suit to force sale of the property. The heirs, led by Harvey and Ida Huntington, drew up a deed

Commissioners' Sale.

Pursuant to decree of sale in the suit of Dawson vs. Dodson et als., pending in the Circuit Court of Fairfax County, Va., the undersigned Commissioners of Sale will, about 12 o'clock, on

Friday, the 28th day of December, 1906,

offer for sale, at public auction, in front of the Court-house of said County, a tract of land containing about

100 Acres,

located about two miles east of Burke Station, in said county, adjoining the lands of Bigelow, Grimsley and the old Gamble tract, being the same land on which Albert Young resided until his death.

A part of this tract is cleared, and the residue is wooded and timbered. It is improved by

Two Small Frame Dwelling Houses,

stable, etc., and is well watered in every field. Most of the land is enclosed by a substantial wire fence, and there is a good orchard upon it.

Terms of Sale:---One-third cash, and the residue in two equal payments at six and twelve months from day of sale, evidenced by the purchaser's interest-bearing notes, and secured by retention of title until the last payment is made, and by assignment of fire insurance policy on the buildings.

R. E. Thornton,
Thomas R. Keith,
Commissioners of Sale.

In the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of Fairfax County, Va., to wit:

I, W. E. Graham, Deputy Clerk of said Court, do certify that the bond required of the Commissioners of Sale in the above-mentioned suit has been executed by Thomas R. Keith, with approved surety.

Given under my hand this 30th day of November, 1906.

November 30, 1906.

W. E. GRAHAM, Deputy Clerk.

Figure 5.

to turn the land over to F.S. McCandlish to sell and divide the income among the heirs. But Hattie Dawson refused to sign the deed. Therefore, Huntington et.al. sued Dawson to force a court ordered sale.⁴⁶ The court agreed and appointed McCandlish as special commissioner to conduct the sale.

The bidding took place on the court house steps in January 1922. But apparently the only person to make an offer was Hattie Dawson. Her offer was \$600. It was rejected by McCandlish and the court. Four months later, in May, another auction was held. This time Dawson bid \$975. It was accepted. It cost her \$1005.88 by the time back taxes were paid.⁴⁷

The fact that no one else was bidding might indicate the low demand for farm land in Fairfax County in the 1920's. Hattie Dawson's deed is dated 30 June 1923.⁴⁸ She held the farm for sixteen years then sold it to Fred and Gladys McLaughlin on 26 May 1939.⁴⁹

*The McLaughlin Family*⁵⁰

Five owners acquired the property between 1939 and 1973 when the Fairfax County Park Authority bought it. Only two of those owners, the McLaughlins and the Mansurs, were able to provide any information about the structure that stood on the property. Both of these owners played a role in its destruction.

Fred McLaughlin came to Washington, D.C., from Iowa to take a federal government job in April 1936. It was in the middle of the Depression. His son, Merlin, surmises that his father may have seen a newspaper advertisement for two and one-half-acre lots in Fairfax County placed by Henry and Dora Schwartz.

Henry and his wife owned land on the property that once belonged to Presley Barker and his father, William, Jr., on the north and east of the 100-acre farm owned by Hattie Dawson. Henry Schwartz ran a used furniture store in Alexandria. The Schwartz's divided their land into two and one half acre lots which they offered for sale under the name "Fairfax Park."

Fred McLaughlin paid \$250 for a lot. Neighbors with names that echoed from the nineteenth century—the Halls and the Harrisons—were separated by heavy forest and a few rutted roads. When Gladys and the children arrived in August 1936, the only thing that stood on the newly purchased lot was a tent surrounded by four logs representing the outline of an imaginary cabin. Before winter set in the cabin grew around the tent. Inadvertently, the cabin was built beyond the property line so Fred had to purchase an additional lot giving him a total of five acres touching on Dawson's farm.

"We were struggling financially," said Merlin. Electricity was brought to the neighborhood in 1939, but running water was never installed in the log house. Merlin recalls that he "personally was able to enjoy running water at such time as I went into the Army in 1945." But roughing it was

not new to Fred who grew up on the plains of Saskatchewan. His dream was to own land.

Hattie Dawson, now 74, put her farm up for sale in 1939. She was no longer living on it. Fred and Gladys bought the 100 acres bordering their five acre lot on 26 May 1939 (Figure 6).⁵¹

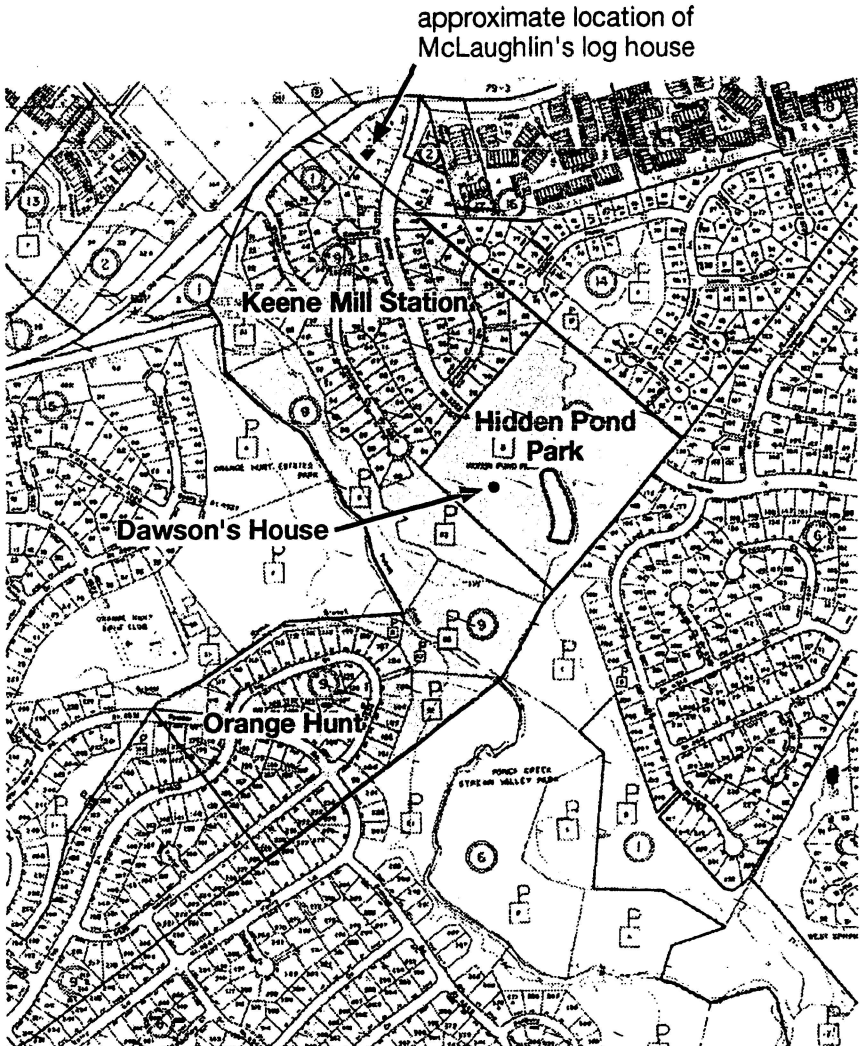


Figure 6. Hattie Dawson's 100-acre farm purchased by Fred McLaughlin in 1939 superimposed on a 1984 map showing that Hidden Pond Park, Keene Mill Station, and a part of Orange Hunt remain within the boundaries of the farm.

Fred McLaughlin describes the frame farm house as having four rooms on the ground level. It had wood siding held up with heavy beams and braces joined by “tongue and groove” (probably mortise and tenon) joints. The interior was plastered. The smallest room, on the north side of the building, was the most interesting. It contained a stone fireplace used for cooking. McLaughlin found a cooking crane there. It also had a small “root cellar,” which was covered by a trap door. The walls were “chinked with clay smoothed and whitewashed.” It was in this room that Merlin remembers finding a “political flier printed in red ink in the wall.” He does not remember what was printed on it but believes it was from “the 1800’s.”⁵²

Fred’s elevated drawings (Figure 7) of the house conform closely to Hattie Dawson’s description cited in the 1906 lawsuit testimony. The simplicity of design of a house that was constructed in at least two documented phases provide a good example of 19th century vernacular farm architecture.

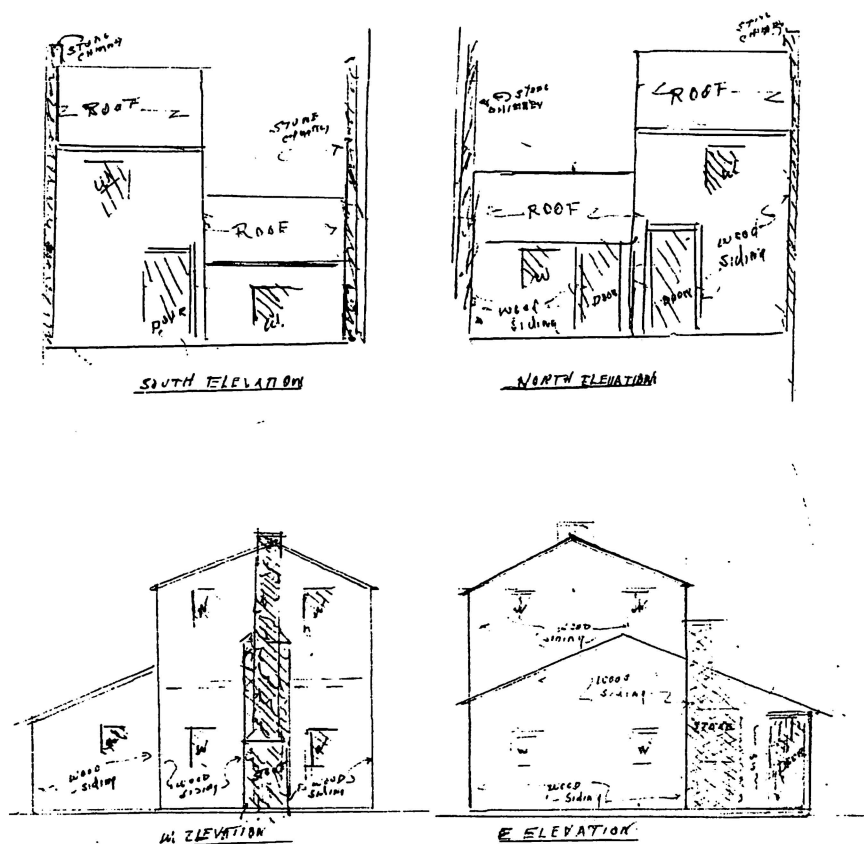


Figure 7. Barker-Young House Elevations: sketches by Fred McLaughlin, January 1994.

The one-and-one-half story, and probably older section of the house, was in a very dilapidated state in the early 1940s. Most of the rooms were collapsed before 1945 when Merlin went into the army, and Fred put the ruins off limits until he pulled it down. Nevertheless, Merlin, his brother Glen and their friends had “plaster battles” there.

The pond from which Hidden Pond Park takes its name was created by Fred McLaughlin in “about 1943.” The dam across “Barker’s Branch” was built in Fred’s absence. It created a pond that covered about three acres. Against McLaughlin’s strict instruction the bulldozer operator pushed earth around stumps and trees and the dam did not hold when a storm put excessive pressure on it. At least one half of the depth was lost when the dam was breached in the 1940s.

Close to the boundaries of Hidden Pond Park, in the adjacent Pohick Creek stream Valley Park, is a cemetery. Only periwinkle provides a hint of what this vacant wooded lot between tract houses along Holford Drive was used for. There are no standing tombstones. But Fred and Merlin McLaughlin remember when they were standing. They were Barker headstones. Merlin recalls “a fair number of granite stones with names professionally carved.” The only stone that remains (face down) with any mark is a crudely carved, approximately two foot long, sandstone with the initials JWS 18??

On 12 October 1993, a survey was conducted by the Fairfax County Park Authority’s Cultural Resources Office. It was filed with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (44FX2088). The survey shows a pattern of small placed stones—limestone, sandstone, and quartz. It was in “Lot 1” in the subdivision of Leonard Barker’s 232 acres in the 1838 settlement discussed above (see Figures 3 and 4).

*The Mansur Family*⁵³

On 12 March 1949 a portion of what was once William Barker’s 287 acres changed hands again. McLaughlin sold 30 of his 100 acres to Edward E. and Caroline E. Mansur.⁵⁴ The acreage included what remained of the farm house. The Mansurs built the major portion of the single story house that later became the office for Hidden Pond Park.

In the files of the park is a letter from Mrs. Mansur, a response to questions from park personnel, that provides a sketch of their life on this land. She also provided aerial photographs taken in the late 1950s and a sketch of the house that they remembered standing on the property when they purchased it.

Edward Mansur was trained as a lawyer and worked as Chief Clerk, and later Legislative Clerk, for 23 years in the United States Senate. According to Caroline Mansur: "We searched within a 25 mile circumference of Washington, D.C., for acreage containing a stream with sloping banks and a narrow conjunction where a dam might be built, resulting in a sizable lake or pond."

Perhaps what attracted the Mansurs was a reduced version of McLaughlin's pond after the storm damage, which they saw as potentially a much larger pond. At any rate, Mrs. Mansur describes in considerable detail in her letter to the park just how they built [rebuilt?] the dam.

The Mansurs found a house standing on the property when they bought it. It was all that remained of the farm house that McLaughlin had partially destroyed.

There was a two-story house on the north side of our property which had been used for a stable. It consisted of two rooms approximately 20' by 15', with a staircase and a single stone chimney—a fireplace above and one below. There had been another room to the north, perhaps a kitchen, with a stone foundation, and a root cellar beneath. The presence of a large black walnut tree nearby, with spirea and daffodils blooming in the spring, pointed to this spot as the main dwelling. We never learned the name of the person who had lived there, but understood that she was a widow and a bit eccentric. The flowers growing there attested to her love of her home. Sadly, the house was beyond restoration, and actually a hazard. When it was torn down, the studs were found to be of hand-hewn cedar with some of the bark still intact. These were made into fence posts. Stones from the chimney and the root cellar were used along the bank of the lake and to create a level space for a kitchen garden later. We found the remains of a cart with two massive wheels near the spot where the stream enters the lake, perhaps the family transport.

Mrs. Mansur provided additional detail in a letter dated 14 June 1995:

Our best recollection is that the sills rested on stones at bearing points. The stone chimney with its two fireplaces was very well built, the lower one being some 6 or 7 feet wide, and built of sizable field stone. It was necessary to dynamite to bring it down...There was some indication that the interior of the house might have been lathed and plastered at one time, some pieces of lath being in place. The roof was tin and quite steep.

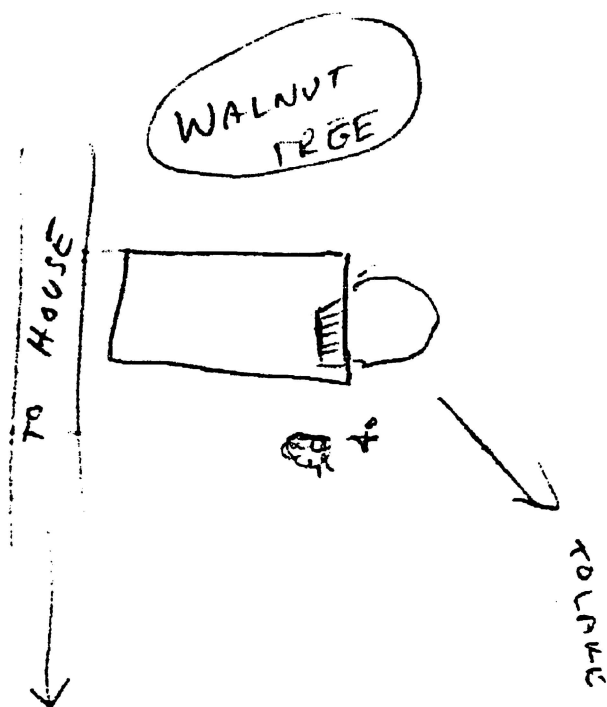
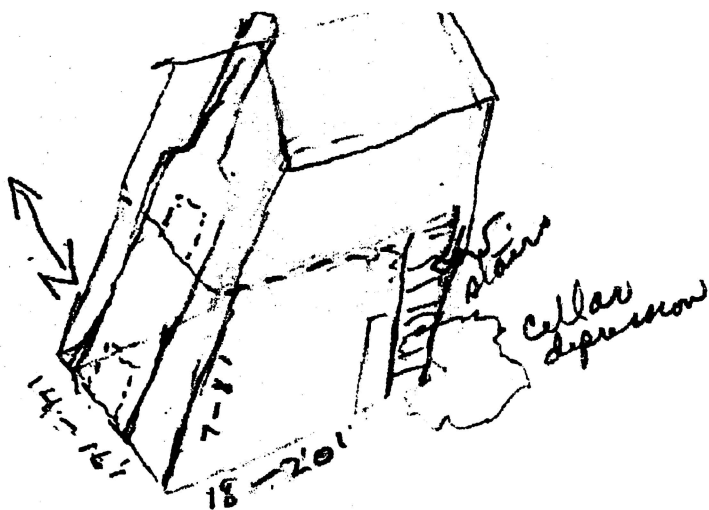


Figure 8. House sketch by Caroline E. Mansur, June 1995.

Mrs. Mansur also provided a sketch of the house drawn from memory (Figure 8). Mansur drew a roughly circled area on the east side of the house, which she labeled "cellar depression." About this she wrote:

There was a depression surrounded by stones which indicated a root cellar, and which was only two feet or so below the ground level, having been filled in naturally. We leveled the area to eliminate an obvious hazard. There may have been a room atop this cellar, but we saw no indication that this was the case. Nor did we see any evidence of a kitchen area.

By putting together the information provided by Hattie Dawson, Fred and Merlin McLaughlin, and Caroline Mansur it is possible to create a conjectural drawing of the house as it existed in various stages (Figure 9).

In her original letter to the park staff, written in 1985, Caroline Mansur described their life and activities creating their "farm." However, in 1958 they decided to move to Yacht Haven near Mt. Vernon. They sold their property to Melvin L. and Imogene F. Fraley.⁵⁵

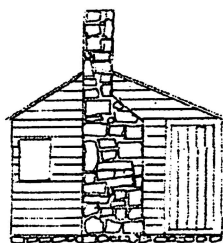
The Fraleys, and then James S. Goodwin, owned the land briefly before it was purchased by Ralph W. Mullen in 1963. Mullen sold the house built by the Mansurs and two of his twenty acres to Tabor E. and Lois O. Dunman in 1964.⁵⁶ The Dunmans expanded the Mansurs' post-World War II house, but by now all trace of the original Barker–Young structure had disappeared.

Mullen, who owned several small properties in Fairfax County, held the surrounding 18 acres for almost ten years. The area lent itself to townhouse development. It was also the last remaining piece of undeveloped land that separated a section of Greeley Boulevard that ran through the community of Rolling Valley from a small northern leg that ran through Keene Mill Station. Citizens of these communities did not want the connection completed and thus facilitate a short cut between Old Keene Mill Road and Rolling Road through their quiet neighborhoods.

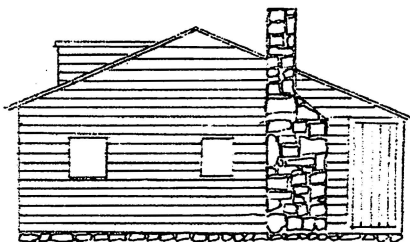
Mullen was prevailed upon by the Springfield Supervisor John F. Herrity, who lived in Rolling Valley, to sell to the Fairfax County Park Authority in March 1973.⁵⁷ The Park Authority also acquired the Dunman's two acres,⁵⁸ bringing the total back to twenty acres. The cost of the acquisition was \$227,980. Herrity then persuaded the Virginia Department of Transportation to set aside plans to complete Greeley Boulevard.⁵⁹

The park was an artificial creation surrounded by communities of ordered streets, sidewalks and lawns. Yet it still retained much of its original definition. The eastern boundary was the original Ravensworth–Barker property line. Its future use as a park became the subject of community discussion.

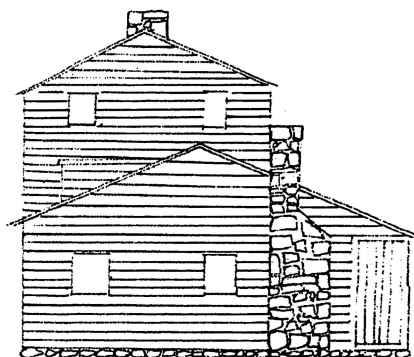
circa 1760



before 1878



after 1878



after 1949

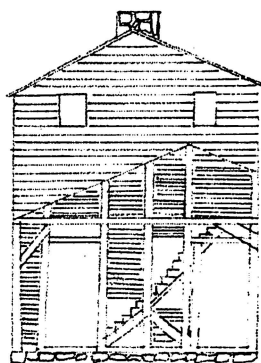


Figure 9. Conjectural elevations of the east facade of the Barker-Young house.

The land was too rolling to lend itself to playing fields—an idea not popular in the surrounding communities anyway. Since the twenty acres bordered the wild Pohick Steam Valley Park, making the new park a nature center was an appealing and welcome extension. The name “Hidden Pond” seemed to capture the setting well. It also suggested a theme by repeating part of the name given to a previously established nature center in Annandale—Hidden Oaks.

In the twenty years between acquisition and the finding of artifacts, the land was allowed to return to a “natural” state. The Mansur house, for a short time used as a visitor center, became the park office. A new frame and brick visitor center overlooking the pond was dedicated in 1978. Residents of the surrounding communities use the park as a recreational retreat. Young and old go there to view wildlife displayed at the visitor center, to play tennis, to bird watch, to walk trails in the woods along Pohick Creek or around the three-acre pond.

The park staff—usually three full-time naturalists—regularly conduct programs for all age groups throughout the year. Pre-schoolers come in groups, as do nearby kindergartens. Teenagers volunteer to work in the park repairing trails, trimming undergrowth, and feeding the displayed wildlife. Adults are offered lectures on local history and nature walks.

But the material record of the long history of this residual rural relic in the West Springfield suburbs—all that remains of a diminished 18th-century land grant—was still in the ground. From 1993 to 1995 volunteer archaeologists explored that ground. They found the house site in an area approximately 135 feet to 180 feet north of the office house (Figure 10). In general, it conformed to what Fred McLaughlin’s floor plan suggested would be there.⁶⁰

The 7,786 historic artifacts that were uncovered (as distinguished from prehistoric—native American—artifacts) provided evidence of more than 200 years of daily life (Figure 11). Refined earthenware such as creamware and pearlware, which were manufactured in England from the mid-18th to the early 19th centuries, revealed economic ties through Alexandria and Colchester to English social tastes. Gray salt-glazed stoneware, a typical farm utility ware, linked to mid-19th century Alexandria potters. But expensive ceramics, such as imported 18th- or early 19th-century porcelain, were not found.

Hidden Pond Park

Phase I Survey Grid & Barker House Location

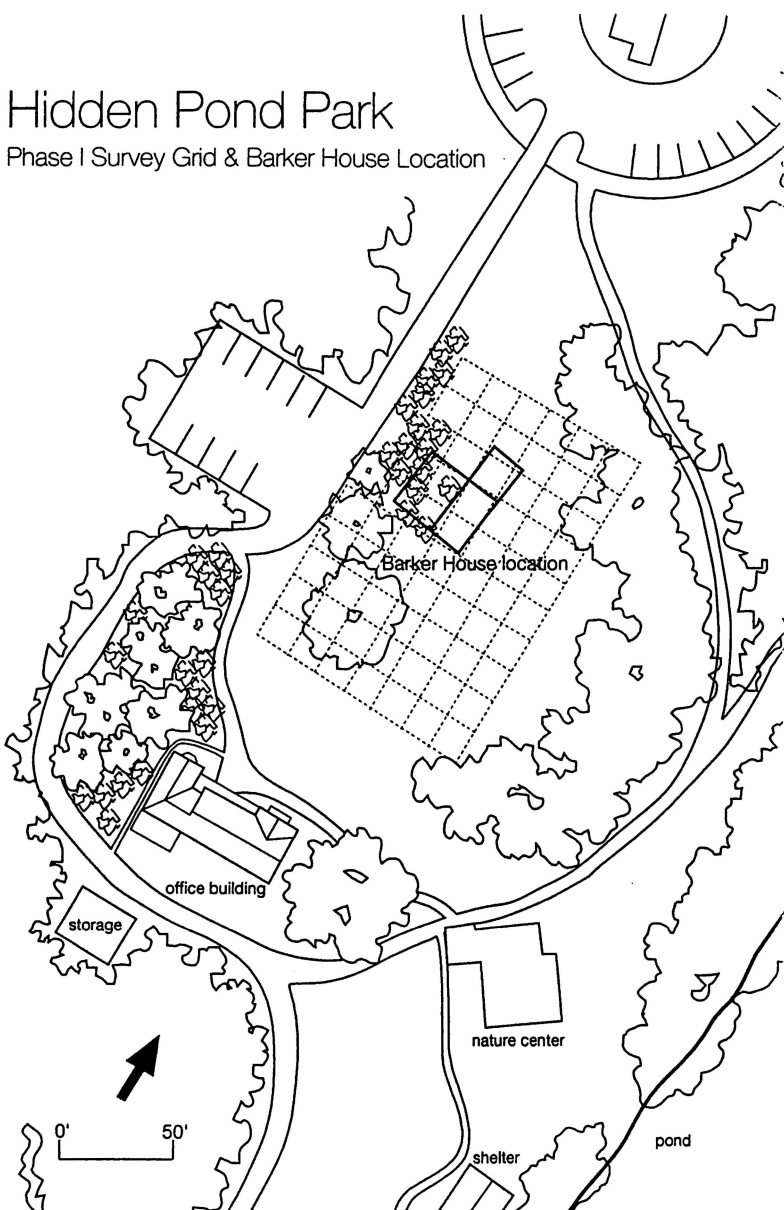


Figure 10. Hidden Pond Park showing the archaeological survey grid and the discovered location of the Barker–Young house.

This collection reflected the material tastes and economic level of middle class farmers, a group which one scholar of Fairfax history finds “difficult to define.” But Patricia Hickin adds:

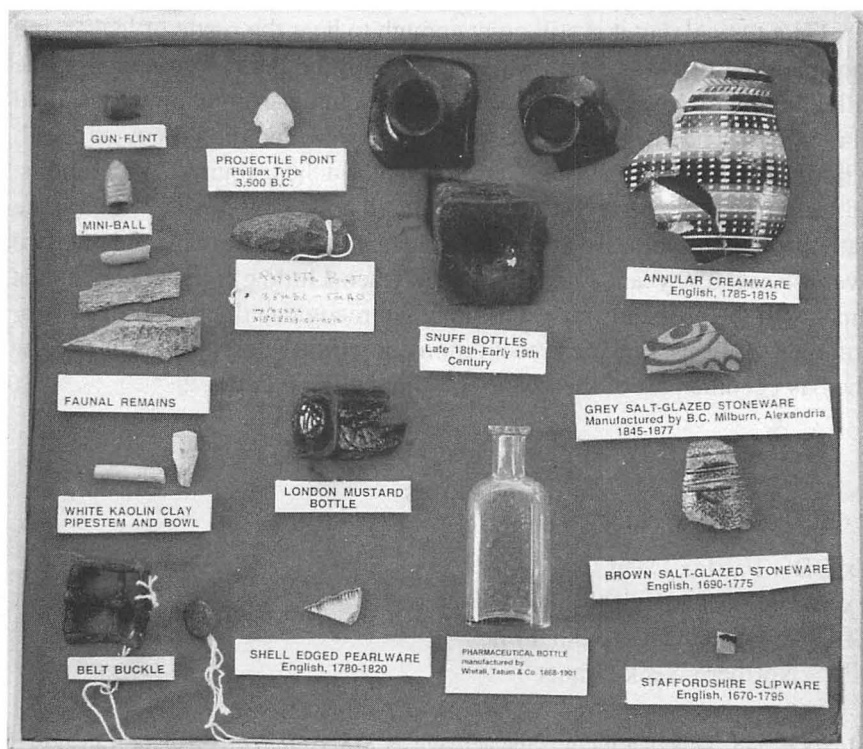


Figure 11. A few of the more than 7,000 artifacts uncovered that reveal both prehistoric and historic activity within Hidden Pond Park. The prehistoric stone points, when placed beside an 18th-century gunflint and a 19th-century mini ball bullet, provide a sketch of the evolution of weapons spanning 5,000 years. The historic artifacts show cultural and economic links to 18th-century and 19th-century Alexandria and England. All artifacts were found within a space of 20 x 30 x 40 feet.

They are generally thought of as the farmers who owned one to three hundred acres of land and a few slaves, or the tavern owners, innkeepers, millers, carriage makers, storekeepers, postmasters, preachers, teachers, surveyors, and the like.”⁶¹

Missing from the site is artifactual evidence that it was occupied as early as 1741. One would expect to find white salt-glazed stoneware (c.1720–1805) or tin-enameled earthenware such as Delft (1600–1800). No significant quantity of ceramic material dating earlier than 1760 was found. The discrepancy between the documentary and material evidence shall probably remain a mystery.

On a typical day it is still quiet enough to hear the rustle of leaves and the snapping of twigs when walking through the park. Occasionally, the talk and laughter of children can be heard coming from a newly installed playground. The place where people lived, loved, and died is covered with wild flowers and tall grasses. Cardinals and finches, squirrels and rabbits, butterflies and bees live out their lives there now. Few people walking the path through this area are aware of the life cycles that were played out here over the past 250 years. Our story began when a little girl held in her hands links with the past and was wise enough to recognize them. Her discovery enlarged and enriched the present moment within which we all live. Now she has become part of the history of Hidden Pond Park.

Notes

Fx DB = Fairfax Deed Book

Fx WB = Fairfax Will Book

Cff = Fairfax Chancery Final File

NN = Northern Neck Grants

¹ NN E:358. This plat records the acreage as 278. Apparently a clerk transposed the digits 7 and 8. The deed gives the acreage as 287.

² Beth Mitchell, *Beginning at a White Oak...The Patents and Northern Neck Grants of Fairfax County, Virginia*, Office of Comprehensive Planning, Fairfax County, Virginia, 1979, p. 120.

³ Fairfax Harrison, *Landmarks of Old Prince William*, Chesapeake Book Company, Berryville, Virginia, 1964. p. 314.

⁴ Prince William, DB 1722-1728:223-230.

⁵ Mitchell, *op.cit.*, pp. 168-173.

⁶ Fx WB H1:83-85 & 210. Fairfax or "Fax" was inherited by Barbary, William's daughter, who made provision for him in her will, dated 19 November 1831, requesting her administrator to furnish land "for said Fax to cultivate and allow him the said fax [*sic*] the use of the above property or residue thereof after all my just debts is [*sic*] paid" (Fx WB Q1:235-236).

⁷ Fx WB H1:83-85.

⁸ George Washington, *Ledger B 1775-1784*:131-200.

⁹ Fx WB H1:210-216.

¹⁰ Fx DB Y1:111-114.

- ¹¹ Fx WB H1:83–85.
- ¹² Fx DB B2:396–398.
- ¹³ Fx DB S2:293–295.
- ¹⁴ Fx DB A2:101–102.
- ¹⁵ Edith Moore Sprouse, *Colchester: Colonial Port on the Potomac*, Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning, Fairfax County, Virginia, 1975, p. 172.
- ¹⁶ See George Washington's 1765–1767 "Sketch of the Roads and Country between Little Huntg Ck. and Colchester," in Richard W. Stephenson, ed., *The Cartography of Northern Virginia: Facsimile Reproductions of Maps Dating from 1608 to 1915*, Office of Comprehensive Planning, Fairfax County, Virginia, 1981, p. 28.
- ¹⁷ Fx WB Q11:240–241.
- ¹⁸ For a more complete discussion of Fairfax's farm economy, see Janice Artemel, "1800–1840," in Nan Netherton, *et al.*, *Fairfax County, Virginia, A History*, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Fairfax County, Virginia, 1978, p. 152.
- ¹⁹ Personal Property Tax List—1815, Fairfax County, Virginia, Library of Virginia, microfilm, Fairfax City Regional Library.
- ²⁰ CFF#3M.
- ²¹ Fx WB R1:173.
- ²² See Jack L. Hiller, "Murder At The Mill: My Search For William H. Keene," *Yearbook: The Historical Society of Fairfax County, Virginia*, Vol. 25, 1995, p. 68. In fact, drunkenness was prevalent among the 19th-century farmers in the Springfield area, as the above reference documents.
- ²³ Fx DB E3:394–399.
- ²⁴ Fx DB P3:295.
- ²⁵ Fx DB D3:539.
- ²⁶ Mitchell, *op.cit.*, p. 200.
- ²⁷ Fx DB B2:396–398.
- ²⁸ See Hiller, *op.cit.*, pp. 53–84.
- ²⁹ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Fairfax County, Virginia*, 165.
- ³⁰ Inquests, 1837–1902, pt. 1, Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives.
- ³¹ Copies of depositions taken at the Coroner's Inquest, *Commonwealth v. Keene*, 30 October 1855, Henry A. Wise Papers, Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- ³² For a full account of this incident, see Hiller, *op.cit.* The escape is not discussed in this account. It is, however, documented in the *Alexandria Gazette*, 4 & 5 April 1856.

- ³³ Fx DB B4:134.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Fx WB Z1:163.
- ³⁶ Fx DB B4:157 & WB Z1:163. In his will, John Rose set aside a “small tract” for his infant daughter, Annie. This probably explains the reduction in acreage between January and June 1859.
- ³⁷ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Alexandria, Virginia*, 222.
- ³⁸ Wesley E. Pippenger, ed., *Alexandria County (Arlington) Marriage Records, 1835–1895*, Family Line Publication, Westminster, Maryland, 1994.
- ³⁹ *Fairfax County Land Tax: 1861, 1867, 1868, 1869*, Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives.
- ⁴⁰ Fx DB L4:208–210.
- ⁴¹ Fx DB W4:417–418.
- ⁴² *Dawson v. Dodson, Et.Al.*, CFF# 119d.
- ⁴³ Fx DB T7:459–461.
- ⁴⁴ Edith Moore Sprouse, *Fairfax County: A Collective Biography*, unpublished manuscript, Virginia Room, Fairfax City Regional Library, 1996, pp. 531–532.
- ⁴⁵ Fx DB T7:459–461.
- ⁴⁶ CFF# 190i, 1921.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Fx DB D9:419–420.
- ⁴⁹ Fx DB L13:581–582.
- ⁵⁰ Fred McLaughlin was interviewed and audiotaped at his home in Front Royal, Virginia, on 31 January 1993. His son, Merlin F. “Mac” McLaughlin, was interviewed on 27 June 1995 at Hidden Pond Park. The information on the McLaughlin family was compiled from both interviews.
- ⁵¹ Fx DB L13:581–582.
- ⁵² Letter from Merlin F. McLaughlin to the author, 15 September 1998.
- ⁵³ Information on the Mansur family was compiled from correspondence in the Hidden Pond Park files and from correspondence between Mrs. Edward E. Mansur and the author in June 1995.
- ⁵⁴ Fx DB 678:464–465.
- ⁵⁵ Fx DB 1698:515–516.
- ⁵⁶ Fx DB 2529:503.
- ⁵⁷ Fx DB 3805:448–452.
- ⁵⁸ Fx DB 3817:59.

⁵⁹ Telephone interview with John F. Herrity, 22 February 1999.

⁶⁰ For a more detailed account of the excavation and analysis, see Jack Lewis Hiller and Valerie Wyers Townes, *Hidden Pond Park: Phase I and Phase II Archaeological Testing of the Barker Site (44FX2032)*, Unpublished Report, Cultural Resources Office, Fairfax County Park Authority, April 1999.

⁶¹ Patricia Hickin, "1840–1870," in Netherton, *et al.*, *op.cit.*, p. 279.

Chain of Title for Hidden Pond Park

Prepared by Jack L. Hiller
February 1993 (Revised 1998)

No.	Owner	Date Acquired	Acreage	Reference
1	William Barker	26 October 1741	287	NN E:358 ¹
2	Leonard Barker	1 July 1797	187	DB A2:101–103 WB H1:83–85
3	Catharine Barker	1838	116	DB E3:394–399 ²
4	John Sutherland & James C. Denty (Trustee)	1 January 1851	116	DB P3:295 Denty paid C. Barker \$581.16 in trust for Sutherland.
5	Thomas Hall	1 January 1859	116	DB B4:134 Purchased at court auction for \$377
6	John Rose	1 January 1859	116	DB B4:134
7	Mary Rose		100	DB B4:157 WB Z1:163
8	John Masten	24 June 1859	100	DB B4:157
9	Albert Young	4 March 1870	100	DB L4:208–210 Young paid \$600 to Masten's estate.
10	Mary Julia Young Emma Elizabeth Young James Philip Young Alice Louisa Young Harry Olander Young Samuel Edward Young Hattie Amelia Young Rosa Virginia Young Susan Alberta Young	31 July 1878	100	DB W4:417–418 These are the children of Albert Young, to whom he gave his property 28 years before he died intestate.
11	L.A. Denty ³	28 December 1906	100	DB T7:459–461 CFF#119d
12	Emma E. Young	30 January 1909	100	DB T7:459–461
13	Hattie A. Dawson ⁴	30 June 1923	100	DB D9:419–420
14	Fred W. McLaughlin & Gladys L. McLaughlin	26 May 1939	100	DB L13:581–582

15	Edward E. Mansur & Caroline E. Mansur	12 March 1949	20+	DB 678:464–465
16	Melvin L. Fraley & Imogene F. Fraley	12 September 1958	20.6196	DB 1698:515–516
17	James S. Goodwin	10 February 1962	20.6196	DB 2106:30–32
18	Ralph W. Mullen (Trustee)	18 June 1963	20.6196	DB 2304:116–117
19	Tabor E. Dunman & Lois O. Dunman	21 October 1964	2.3596	DB 2529:503
20	Fairfax County Park Authority	23 March 1973	18.2384	DB 3805:448–452 From Mullen to Fairfax County
21	Fairfax County Park Authority	24 April 1973	2.3647	DB 3817:59 From Dunman to Fairfax County

¹ Mitchell, Beth. *Beginning at a White Oak...The Patents and Northern Neck Grants of Fairfax County, Virginia. Fairfax County, Virginia: Office of Comprehensive Planning, 1977, p.120.* The actual Northern Neck plat states “278 acres,” but the deed states “Two hundred eighty seven Acres.”

² A plat shows the division of property and the location of homes. Catharine Barker was the daughter of Leonard and the granddaughter of William.

³ Denty purchased the land for \$1,000 at court auction. See *Dawson v. Dodson* (DFF#119d–1906).

⁴ Hattie Dawson purchased the land at court auction for \$975 after the death of her sister Emma. See *Huntington v. Dawson* (CFF#190i–1921).

Key to Reference Abbreviations

NN = Northern Neck Grant. The original can be found in the Virginia State Library, Archives Division. A microfilm is on file at the Fairfax City Regional Library, Virginia Room.

DB = Deed Book; WB = Will Book. Located in the Fairfax County Court House.



KEENE'S MILL

A saw and grist mill built by James Keene between 1796 and 1800, when it was expanded, stood on the north side of the original Keene Mill Road right-of-way just to the east of this marker. The mill served the surrounding farm community for approximately sixty years and provided the landmark after which Old Keene Mill Road was named. Two mill races are all that remain on the site.

FAIRFAX COUNTY HISTORY COMMISSION, 1998

Keene's Mill Marked

by

Jack Lewis Hiller

Fairfax History Commission

In June 1998, the Fairfax County History Commission approved the text for a historical marker to be placed on the east shoulder of Huntsman Boulevard entering Shannon Station in West Springfield near the site of Keene's Mill. The marker was dedicated on June 5, 1999. This action initiates a historical marker program that is new to Fairfax County.

Anyone who travels in Virginia is familiar with the historic markers frequently seen on roads all over the state. That program began in 1926, and Fairfax has its share of state markers. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources is responsible for approving texts that focus on sites, persons or existing places that are of regional, state or national historic significance that anyone may recommend. The recommending party has to pay for the marker, however. The cost is currently \$1,100.

The state does not mark places of just local historic significance. That is up to the local jurisdiction. Arlington County and Prince William County are among the jurisdictions that have local historic marker programs in place. This will be the first time for Fairfax County.

Keene's Mill was a local grist and saw mill that harnessed the power of Pohick Creek. It was built by James Keene after 1796, the year he acquired six acres adjacent to his property and the creek for the purpose of creating a mill pond. He raised the level of the pond in 1800. The mill provided a service to local farmers for approximately sixty years. The ownership changed hands ten times, but after 1892 no records of ownership exist. The mill probably stopped functioning around the time of the Civil War.

Just before the war, in October 1855, the mill was the center of community concern when the owner, William H. Keene, stabbed a neighbor, Lewis Q. Hall. Keene was found guilty of murder and condemned to hang. However, Governor Henry A. Wise commuted the sentence to ten years in the state penitentiary. All of the prison records were lost in the Civil War, so it is not known what happened to Keene.

Located on the Pohick Creek flood plain, the land belongs to the Fairfax County Park Authority. All that remains are two mill races—a dry earthen channeled head race for an overshot wheel exiting at a right angle into a stagnant rain-water-filled ditch that at one time serviced an undershot wheel.

The living legacy of Keene's Mill is the name given to the road that ran beside it. In 1979 the road was widened and straightened, moving it away from the mill site, to accommodate heavy suburban traffic. The section of Old Keene Mill Road running from Pohick Creek west to Pohick Road (now incorporated into the Fairfax County Parkway) is probably the oldest section of the road, dating to an 1808 petition by James Keene to the court to build such a road.

The road from Pohick Creek east toward Franconia Road and Alexandria, crossing Accotink Creek and meeting Backlick Road, was cut through in the 1870s long after the mill ceased to function. Old Keene Mill Road, originally a simple rutted dirt path, has been paved and widened many times since the 1950s saw the earliest flowering of suburbia in Springfield. The name remains, but the mill and its location have long been forgotten. This historic marker will be a reminder of where it stood and served a local diversified 19th century farm economy.

The Fairfax historic markers have a different appearance from the state markers. The design is called "Georgian" by the manufacturer, SEWAH Studios in Marietta, Ohio. It has a raised "camel back" hump where the county seal is displayed. The text is in dark blue letters on a buff field. A dark-blue edge frames the text and the seal. The colors were those worn by George Washington and the Fairfax Militia—later adopted by the General's Continental Army staff.

The History Commission hopes to place markers at other sites of local historic significance and will continue to recommend locations for state markers. The Commission has agreed to fund up to three markers (state or local) a year to initiate the program.

To recommend a marker site, one must submit a text (no more than 100 words) with supporting documentation and a site map. A committee reviews, edits, and evaluates the material, and then makes a recommendation to the full Commission. If approved, the request is then submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (even for local markers). The requesting party will also be asked for supporting funds to offset the manufacturing costs and to enable more markers to be placed, but funding is not required to get the Commission's approval.

Between the summer of 1998 and the spring of 1999 the History Commission approved five additional historic markers—two local markers and three state markers. A local marker will be placed at the entrance to the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) parking lot along Hechinger Drive near Backlick Road in Springfield. The VRE station is located close to the site of the original Springfield Station that was built by Henry Daingerfield

after the Orange and Alexandria Railroad crossed his land in 1851. He bought the land only seven months before the railroad crossed, and he called his 900-acre acquisition "Springfield Farm." The station served as the Springfield Post Office from 1866 to 1868, as Corbett from 1907 to 1910, and as Springfield again from 1910 to 1953. Although the station was moved up and down the track and on both sides numerous times until it was razed in 1963, the name Springfield lasted to the present day.

Another local marker, "Price's Ordinary," will be placed at the northeast corner of the intersection of Backlick and Braddock Roads. At the site where an Amoco gas station is now located once stood an "ordinary" or tavern where local "freeholders" (property owners) met. In 1787 twenty-nine Fairfax freeholders met there to urge the state legislature to call for the election of a state convention to ratify the new U.S. Constitution.

A new state marker was put up this spring along Arlington Boulevard near Thomas Jefferson Library. It is titled "Camp Alger," and calls the public's attention to a very large Spanish-American War training camp that extended from Providence Park to Merrifield to Dunn-Loring and Falls Church. The camp existed for just five months in 1898 and housed 23,500 men. Their presence and an outbreak of typhoid fever had a great impact on the area.

Another new state marker will recognize the existence of Ft. Lyon, which guarded the southern entrance to Washington, D.C., and Alexandria during the Civil War. Today the Huntington Metro station along King's Highway occupies a portion of the fort. The fort was the site of a huge explosion in 1863, when the powder magazine blew up—occasioning a visit by President Lincoln in June. Negotiations are under way to place the marker on Metro property.

The last new state marker will recognize the existence of the second oldest town to be founded in Fairfax—Colchester. Created in 1753 (Alexandria was founded in 1749), Colchester was a thriving commercial and tobacco port on the Occoquan Creek. A number of factors contributed to the town's decline: competition from Alexandria and Baltimore for the Shenandoah Valley wheat trade; the changing of the post road to further up the Occoquan; and what may have been a large fire in 1815. The marker will be placed along the northbound lane of Richmond Highway (Route 1) near Furnace Road, about one-third mile from the Occoquan bridge.

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources is also rewriting and replacing missing or damaged state markers in the county. There are approximately ten that will be replaced and, in some cases, relocated in the months ahead. History in Fairfax County will be well marked in the 21st century.



James Ulysses Kincheloe, Commissioner of the Revenue, Fairfax County, Virginia, ca. 1890. From 1919 until his death in 1947, "Jim" Kincheloe served as Commissioner of the Revenue for Fairfax County longer than any other individual. Note the Masonic lapel pin. Photograph courtesy of J. Gordon Kincheloe.

Commissioners of the Revenue, Fairfax County, Virginia 1786 to Present

by
William Page Johnson II

Mr. Johnson is the Commissioner of the Revenue for the City of Fairfax. He is a graduate of George Mason University and is the author of Brothers and Cousins: Confederate Soldiers and Sailors of Fairfax County, Virginia. He is president-elect of the Noonday Optimist Club of Fairfax and also a Director of Historic Fairfax City, Inc., and Vice President of the Fairfax County Historical Society. Mr. Johnson is a fifth generation native of Fairfax, an eleventh generation Virginian, and a direct lineal descendant of two signers of the Declaration of Independence—Thomas Nelson, Jr., and Carter Braxton.

Virginia's Commissioners of the Revenue are one of five locally elected "constitutional officers" whose authority is specifically conveyed in the Virginia constitution. The other four are Clerks of the Court, Commonwealth Attorneys, Sheriffs, and Treasurers. The Commissioner of the Revenue is the chief assessing officer of the locality and is responsible for administering a variety of local and state taxes.

Historically, the duties, responsibilities, number, and even who should assess taxes in Virginia have varied greatly from one era to another. In 17th c. Virginia tax assessment in was initially the responsibility of the Governor and his Privy Council. This method worked well until the growth of the colony forced a change. In 1634 *shires* or counties were established. The Governor appointed a sheriff for each shire. Among the many duties of the sheriff was tax assessment. Each would prepare lists of *tithables* (i.e., taxable property) based on the information supplied to him by the citizens. This method too, soon proved inadequate and the responsibility was transferred to the local county court in the mid-1600s. After first appointing special assessors, the court justices themselves assumed the role, with each justice assessing individuals within their respective precincts. In response to the need for additional revenue to finance the Revolution, the Virginia

General Assembly made the first attempt to provide for a more permanent method of assessment by creating the position of Commissioner of Tax about 1782. These individuals were to be elected annually. They were to divide the counties into districts, prepare a list of all taxpayers within each district and appoint assessors to visit each household. Taxpayers were required to, under oath, divulge to the assessor all of their taxable property. The assessor noted the property on a list, fixed a value to it, and assessed the appropriate amount of tax. Citizens could appeal the decisions of the assessors directly to the Commissioners.¹

After some experimenting and procedural variations with the Tax Commissioners, the position of Commissioner of the Revenue was created by an act of the Virginia General Assembly in 1786. In general, the act attempted to make uniform and permanent the process by which taxes were assessed. Early Virginia Commissioners of the Revenue were charged with the responsibility of assessing the county levy both for personal property taxes and land taxes. The Act of 1786 stipulated that Commissioners were to be elected by the court and that only “*discreet and reputable persons*”² be considered. The Assembly was well aware of the pivotal role of the Commissioner and attempted to make the appointment of Commissioners as incorruptible as possible by stating:

*Members of either House of Assembly, persons holding any office in civil government, Naval Officers, practicing Attorneys, or Physicians, Clerks of Courts, Inspectors, Ordinary-Keepers, Sheriffs or their Deputies, or the Collector of public taxes shall not be capable of acting or serving as Commissioner.*³

The Act provided for as many as three Commissioners for each county at the discretion of the Assembly. In the event of multiple Commissioners, the county was to be divided into districts. In 1786, Fairfax County had two Commissioners of the Revenue who were appointed by a simple majority vote of the Fairfax County Circuit Court. Newly appointed Commissioners in Fairfax were required to take the following oath:

*I _____ do swear (or solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm) that as Commissioner for _____ County, I will, to the best of my skill and judgement, diligently and faithfully execute the duties of the said office, according to the directions of the act, entitled ‘An Act to Amend the Act, entitled An Act for Ascertaining Certain Taxes and Duties, and for Establishing a Permanent Revenue,’ without favour, affection, or partiality, and that I will do equal right and justice, according to the best of my knowledge in every case in which I shall act as Commissioner: so help me God.*⁴

Form of return of taxable property to be made by the commissioners.

List of taxable property within the district of A. B. commissioner in the county of C—, for the year 1786

Date of receiving lists from individuals	Persons names, chargeable with the tax.	Names of white male tithables above 21.	Number of white males above 16 and under 21.	Blacks above 16.	Blacks under 16.	Horses, mares, colts & mules	Cattle.	Carriage wheels	Ordinary licenses	Billiard tables.	No. of stud horses.	Rates of covering prison	Practising physicians, apothecaries & surgeons.
1786	10 A. C.	A C	1	2	3	4	5	2	1	1	1	£.2 0 0	
March 10	11 A. D.	AD & EF	"	1	2	1	3	"	1	"	"	0 0 0	
	12 A. E.	A E.	"	"	"	"	0	"	"	"	"	0 0 0	
	10 B. F.	BF & IK	2	10	15	9	30	6	"	"	2	5 0 0	
	12 C. G.	C G	"	15	10	10	25	"	1	"	"	0 0 0	
	13 D. H.	D H	3	"	1	2	7	"	1	1	"	0 0 0	
Total amount.			9	6	28	31	26	70	8	4	2	3	7 0 0

Form of Return of Personal Property established by an act of the Virginia General Assembly, October 11, 1786. A modern version of this form is still in use. Source: Henning, Statutes at Large, Vol. XII, p. 354, c. 1823, Richmond, Virginia.

Commissioners then had to “*qualify*” for office by posting a bond and supplying two “*sureties*,” or guarantors, with the court.⁵

Pursuant to the act of 1786, Fairfax County was divided into two districts by the county court. Known variously as North and South, or Upper and Lower, each Commissioner covered roughly half of the County. Fairfax’s two Episcopal parishes, Fairfax (South) and Truro (North), defined the boundaries with the dividing line being Little River Turnpike. Fairfax County had two Commissioners of the Revenue from 1786 until 1822, when the Assembly provided that only one Commissioner should represent the entire county. Robert Ratcliffe, who had been serving as Commissioner in Truro Parish, became the new sole Commissioner.

As with the earlier Tax Commissioners, Commissioners of the Revenue were empowered to enter a person’s home and require him to divulge, under oath, all taxable property. This practice was to continue well into the 20th century. If the taxpayer was not home, the Commissioners had, and still have, the power to summon the taxpayer to answer questions relating to tax obligations. The Commissioners were to use a form prescribed by the General Assembly for keeping land tax and personal property books. Each Commissioner was to compile four duplicate copies of this form. Retaining a copy for themselves, they were to send one to the Clerk of the Court to be duly recorded, one to the Sheriff so that he may collect the tax, and one to the Commonwealth as evidence of taxes due from the Sheriff.

As the population and the number of items subject to tax increased, the importance of the Commissioner of the Revenue increased as well. Commissioners of the Revenue were usually among the leading citizens of the day. In addition to requiring that Commissioners be persons of “*discreet and reputable*”⁶ character, the position clearly required someone who could not only read and write, but someone who could *cipher* (i.e., add and subtract) as well. The first Commissioner of the Revenue for Truro Parish was James Wren.⁷ Wren was a notable architect and builder of the Falls Church Episcopal Church c. 1767 and the Fairfax County Courthouse c. 1800. Another early Commissioner was Richard Ratcliffe, founder of the Town of Providence, now the City of Fairfax.⁸

The position was largely unsung but vital to the operation of the government. Pay was generally meager, Commissioners being paid on a per diem basis, but expenses were allowed. In 1792, John Moss of Fairfax Parish was paid about 25 pounds for “*76 days and 4 quires of paper*”⁹ (a quire of paper being about 100 sheets). By 1816 things had changed only slightly. Commissioner Thomas Payne of Truro Parish produced

an account for “150.00 for his services, which the Court thought was a reasonable allowance.”¹⁰

In 1854, John B. Hunter was re-appointed by the court but failed to “qualify” by posting the required bond. The court then ordered that the Commissioner of the Revenue be elected directly by the voters. Ironically, the incumbent, John B. Hunter, was instructed by the court to essentially act as a registrar of voters and make a list of all eligible voters in the county. For this he was paid an additional \$47.25 and, not surprisingly, elected Commissioner of the Revenue.¹¹

In spring 1861 Virginians by their thousands were enlisting in the fledgling Confederate Army. Men from all walks of life were laying aside their usual occupations to take up arms in the impending War Between the States. In some instances men comprising the entire local government had left to join the army. If the situation were not addressed, there would be no one left at home to maintain the government. This included the critical function of revenue collection. This so alarmed Virginia Governor John Letcher that in April 1861 he was compelled to issue the following Executive Order:

TO ALL SHERIFFS, COMMISSIONERS OF THE REVENUE, AND TELEGRAPH OPERATORS IN THE COMMONWEALTH. – Notice is hereby given to such officers, that they are not to leave their positions under any circumstances. It is essential to the State that the duties of such officers should be promptly performed, and they are as necessary as the services of the military in the field.

By order of the Governor.

GEO. W. MUNFORD

Secretary of the Commonwealth^{11a}

During the Civil War, Fairfax County changed hands several times and the loyalties of its citizens were decidedly split. However, on May 22, 1862, with Fairfax C.H. under tenuous Federal control, a new loyalist government was elected, including a new loyal Commissioner of the Revenue, Joseph Stiles.¹² Stiles’ term in office was short-lived; in December 1862, while leading a scouting party of the 17th Pennsylvania Cavalry near the Occoquan River, he was captured by Confederate forces and sent to prison in Richmond, Virginia.¹³ Confederate Assistant Secretary of War, J.A. Campbell wrote of him to the Provost Marshal of Confederate Prisoners, Brig. Gen. John H. Winder:

Joseph Stiles (is) to be returned as a prisoner. If a case cannot be made out against him as a Spy he will be valuable as a hostage for our citizens held as prisoners.¹⁴

Ever responsive and sensitive to its fiscal needs, the Fairfax County court appointed an interim Deputy Commissioner to serve “until the Commissioner is able to return to his duties.” Another loyalist, Job Hawxhurst, was appointed Deputy to fill in for Joseph Stiles.¹⁵ Owing to the destructive nature of the Civil War, Fairfax County Court records are incomplete for this time period. However, it is clear that Joseph Stiles had eventually returned to serve as Commissioner of the Revenue and was reelected in 1864 and continued to serve until 1866. Perhaps the postwar climate in Fairfax was too hostile for a loyal Unionist Commissioner, or perhaps his stay in a Confederate prison had taken too much of a physical toll. Whatever the reason Joseph Stiles resigned as Commissioner of the Revenue in February 1866. The Fairfax County Court ordered that a special election be held March 8th, 1866 to elect a new Commissioner of the Revenue. John W. Graham was elected to succeed Stiles.

During Reconstruction, Virginia was readmitted to the Union under a new constitution. Adopted in 1869, the new Underwood constitution prescribed the most radical changes to the Virginia code in history. Among other things the new constitution attempted to make the form of government in Virginia more uniform. In addition to a Board of Supervisor/City Council form of government for each county and city, the new constitution created five elected constitutional officers for each county and city. Clerks of the Court, Commonwealth Attorneys, Treasurers, Commissioners of the Revenue and Sheriffs were to be elected by the voters. Terms of office for all, except Clerks of the Court, were at first unspecified. An amendment in 1874 stipulated that the number of Commissioners per county would continue to be determined by the General Assembly, they would serve four year terms and they would be compensated primarily through fees.^{16,17}

One key element of the Underwood constitution was that it did not disenfranchise soldiers of the former Confederate States. As a result, the first Reconstruction-era Commissioner of the Revenue elected from Fairfax County was a Confederate veteran, Herbert C. Fairfax.¹⁸ Another fundamental provision of the new constitution was the creation of a new office, that of Treasurer. The Commissioner of the Revenue would now turn over his assessment lists to the Treasurer for collection rather than to the Sheriff.

With the population growth in Fairfax County following the Civil War, the Virginia legislature decreed that there would be “one assessor for each township in the several counties of the commonwealth”¹⁹ elected for a period of one year. ‘Townships’ were also known later as magisterial districts. In 1876, probably bowing to local pressure, the

Assembly reversed itself and once again mandated two Commissioners of the Revenue for Fairfax County.

As with the other constitutional offices, the election of a Commissioner of the Revenue was rarely contested. However, in 1879 the Commissioner of the Revenue from the North District of Fairfax County, J.M. Thorne, retired. Three men—Dick Broadwater, Amos Fox, and former Commissioner John W. Graham—ran for his seat. The election was decided by just 26 votes, in favor of Broadwater. John Graham filed a petition with the court, signed by a requisite 15 voters, and contested the election results. The petitioners were John R. Taylor, Jr., William L. Riggles, William H. Davis, John H. Hopkins, William H. Fox, Judson R. Vehie, Charles F. Taylor, Richard Johnson, Thomas F. Lee, George Milton Barnes, T.T. Taylor, G.R.L. Turberville, B. Skinner, J.T. Pettitt, and Graham himself. He claimed that the Election Judges did not sign the election returns in two precincts, Annandale and Moore's Store; therefore, the votes cast in those two precincts should have been disqualified. In addition, he stated that because there were no poll books at Annandale, it was impossible to know who was qualified to vote. And finally at various precincts there were a large number of voters, "*100 or more*," who should have been disqualified because they had not paid the poll tax for 1878 but were allowed to vote because they paid it on the day of the election. Graham's petition was thrown out because 3 of the 15 men who signed his petition contesting the election were themselves not registered to vote!²⁰

Commissioners continued to be elected and served four-year terms until the Constitutional Convention of 1901. There was considerable debate within the legislature as to whether Commissioners should be elected or appointed. Initially, the Assembly chose election, then reversed itself in 1906 and prescribed judicial appointment. In 1908 it reversed itself again declaring Commissioners to be elected. Virginia voters finally resolved the issue in 1910 when they approved an amendment declaring that Commissioners henceforth be elected.²¹

Beginning in 1912, the Assembly directed that five Commissioners of the Revenue should represent the citizens of Fairfax County in each magisterial district except Centreville and Lee districts, which were to have only one Commissioner of the Revenue. This practice continued until 1920 when the legislature provided that only one Commissioner of the Revenue represent all Fairfax County.²² In that year, James U. Kincheloe was first elected and began a career that would span 27 years, making him the longest continuous serving Commissioner of the Revenue in Fairfax County history.

Fairfax County, Va. Election Ticket

Election to be held on Tuesday, Nov. 7, 1911.

For State Senator from the 14th Senatorial District of Virginia,

R. E. THORNTON
ALEX. J. WEDDERBURN.

For House of Delegates from Fairfax County, Va.
WALTER TANSILL OLIVER.

For County Clerk,
F. W. RICHARDSON.

For County Treasurer,
ROBERT WILEY.

For Sheriff,
J. R. ALLISON.

For Attorney for the Commonwealth,
C. VERNON FORD.

Mt. Vernon District.

For Supervisor,
W. F. P. REID.

For Comm'r of Revenue—Mt. Vernon District,
G. K. PICKETT.

For Comm'r of Revenue—Centreville and Lee Districts,
J. N. BALLARD.

For Comm'r of Revenue—Falls Church District,
GEO. W. BLADEN.

For Comm'r of Revenue—Providence District,
W. H. MAFFETT.

For Comm'r of Revenue—Dranesville District,
S. A. WRENN.

For Commissioners of Roads,
GEO. R. JAVINS,
N. E. DOVE.

For Justices of the Peace,
JOHN H. BRODERS.
JNO. T. HAISLIP.

For Constable,
A. J. PAYNE.

For Overseer of the Poor,
WM. R. WARD.

Fairfax County election ticket, 1911. In this election voters were to choose a Commissioner of the Revenue from each Magisterial District in the county. Source: Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives.

In 1928, the 'one Commissioner' measure was adopted by all localities statewide. The 1930s ushered in the modern era of the Commissioner of the Revenue. In 1934, the legislature abolished the fee-based compensation system for Commissioners of the Revenue and created the State Compensation Board which, to this day determines the salaries of the Commissioners and provides their offices with partial state funding. Also in the 1930s the Assembly passed legislation allowing counties and cities to adopt an optional form of government. In a county adopting an optional form of government, a Department of Finance would replace the Commissioner of the Revenue and the Treasurer.²³

In 1947, John W. Ferguson, who was destined to be the last Commissioner of the Revenue in Fairfax County, succeeded Mr. Kincheloe. Fairfax County continued with a traditional form of government until 1954, when voters, by referendum, authorized an optional *County Executive* form of government. Under this form of government a County Executive and a Director of Finance were established, and the Offices of the Commissioner of the Revenue and the Treasurer were abolished. In response to continued urbanization, in 1960 the Assembly authorized certain counties, by referendum, to establish an *Urban County Executive* form of government. Fairfax County currently has this form of government.²⁴ Of the remaining 134 localities across the Commonwealth, 129 still maintain the traditional form of government with a Commissioner of the Revenue and other constitutional officers.

Within Fairfax County, two jurisdictions—the City of Fairfax and the City of Falls Church—still maintain the traditional form of government utilizing a Commissioner of the Revenue and Treasurer. In 1981, Juanita W. Dickerson made history when she was elected Commissioner of the Revenue for the City of Fairfax. She is the only female Commissioner of the Revenue to have served in that capacity within the bounds of Fairfax County.

Today the Office of the Commissioner of the Revenue administers up to a dozen separate taxes: Business License Tax (BPOL), Bank Franchise Stock Tax, Cigarette Tax, Motor Vehicle Rental Tax, Meals Tax, Personal Property Tax, Public Service Corporation Tax, Transient Occupancy Tax, Utility Tax, and Virginia Income Tax. Commissioners assist taxpayers in completing all tax returns and filing forms, and in general compliance with all tax statutes. They represent *the* closest link between voters and elected government. By the very nature of their positions, they have access to private financial records of both individuals and businesses. Therefore, what was true in 1786 is still true today—Commissioners of the Revenue must be persons of “*discreet and reputable*”²⁵ character.

Fairfax County Commissioners of the Revenue

Truro Parish

1786 - 1787 James Wren
 1787 - 1788 Martin Cockburn (resigned)
 1788 - 1792 James Wren
 1792 - 1797 Richard Ratcliffe

Fairfax Parish

1786 - 1797 John Moss

North District

1797 - 1800 Thomas Pollard, Jr. (resigned)*
 1800 - 1803 Robert Moss
 1803 - 1807 William Middleton
 1807 - 1809 Thomas Moss
 1809 - 1811 Thompson Violet
 1811 - 1814 Robert Ratcliffe (resigned)
 1814 - 1817 Edward Payne
 1817 - 1836 Robert Ratcliffe†
 1836 - 1837 Alexander J. Sangster
 1837 - 1839 Robert Ratcliffe
 1839 - 1841 Francis F. Ratcliffe
 1841 - 1842 James M. Halley
 1842 - 1851 Robert Ratcliffe
 1851 - 1863 John B. Hunter
 1863 - 1866 Joseph Stiles (resigned)††
 1866 - 1869 John W. Graham
 1869 - 1870 George Auld
 1870 Herbert C. Fairfax

South District

1797 - 1809 George Minor, Jr.
 1809 - 1815 Joseph Powell
 1815 - 1819 Thomas Payne
 1819 - 1822 George Millan

Fairfax County (by Township)

1871

Centreville	Albert Wrenn
Dranesville	Daniel L. Borden
Falls Church	E.J. Birch
Lee	Samuel Stone
Mount Vernon	Robert Wiley
Providence	Newman Burke

1872

Centreville	J.M. Hutchinson
Dranesville	unknown - name not found
Falls Church	E.J. Birch
Lee	unknown - name not found
Mount Vernon	Robert Wiley
Providence	O.E. Hine

1873

Centreville	George W. Lee
Dranesville	John Powell
Falls Church	E.J. Birch
Lee	Samuel T. Stone
Mount Vernon	Robert Wiley
Providence	Abram Lydecker

1874

Centreville	James L. Cross
Dranesville	Robert H. Mateer
Falls Church	Talmadge Thorn
Lee	Frank Wooster
Mount Vernon	Robert Wiley
Providence	F.M. Smith

1875

Centreville	George W. Lee
Dranesville	Charles Stag
Falls Church	J.M. Thorne
Lee	Frank Wooster
Mount Vernon	Robert Wiley
Providence	W.W. Skinner

North District

1876 - 1879	J.M. Thorne
1880 - 1887	R.F. Broadwater
1888 - 1914	Samuel A. Wrenn

South District

1876 - 1887	Francis Wooster
1888 - 1891	Robert Wiley
1892 - 1919	John N. Ballard (died in office)

Fairfax County (by Districts)

1912

Centreville & Lee	John N. Ballard
Dranesville	Samuel A. Wrenn
Falls Church	George W. Bladen
Mount Vernon	George K. Pickett
Providence	William H. Maffett

1916

Centreville & Lee	John N. Ballard
Dranesville	E.E. Gillette
Falls Church	George W. Bladen
Mount Vernon	George K. Pickett
Providence	J. Parker Milburn

1913

Centreville & Lee	John N. Ballard
Dranesville	Samuel A. Wrenn
Falls Church	George W. Bladen
Mount Vernon	George K. Pickett
Providence	William H. Maffett

1917

Centreville & Lee	John N. Ballard
Dranesville	E.E. Gillette
Falls Church	George W. Bladen
Mount Vernon	R.S. Wiley
Providence	J. Parker Milburn

1914

Centreville & Lee	John N. Ballard
Dranesville	Samuel A. Wrenn
Falls Church	George W. Bladen
Mount Vernon	George K. Pickett
Providence	William H. Maffett

1918

Centreville & Lee	John N. Ballard
Dranesville	E.E. Gillette
Falls Church	George W. Bladen
Mount Vernon	R.S. Wiley
Providence	J. Parker Milburn

1915

Centreville & Lee	John N. Ballard
Dranesville	E.E. Gillette
Falls Church	George W. Bladen
Mount Vernon	George K. Pickett
Providence	J. Parker Milburn

1919

Centreville & Lee	John N. Ballard
Dranesville	E.E. Gillette
Falls Church	George W. Bladen
Mount Vernon	R.S. Wiley
Providence	J. Parker Milburn

Fairfax County

1920 - 1947 James U. Kincheloe (died in office)
1947 - 1954 John W. Ferguson

City of Falls Church

1948 - 1972 A. Burke Hertz
1972 - 1991 Claude E. Wells
1991 - Harold L. Miller

City of Fairfax

1961 - 1965 Frank M. Carter
1966 - 1981 A. Howell Thomas, Jr.
1982 - 1997 Juanita W. Dickerson
1998 - William P. Johnson, II

Fairfax County Directors of Finance

1954 - 1968 Lewis M. Coyner
1968 - 1972 Dean A. Porter
1972 - 1989 Warren S. Hutchison
1989 - Susan S. Planchon

- * 1798 James Coleman was appointed a Special Commissioner of the Revenue to “levy the newly annexed part of Loudoun, to list taxables and return books to Clerk of the Court.”²⁶
- † In 1822 the Virginia General Assembly provided that only one Commissioner of the Revenue would serve all of Fairfax County.
- †† Joseph Stiles was arrested by Confederate forces and imprisoned in Richmond for most of 1863. Job Hawxhurst was appointed Deputy Commissioner by the Fairfax County Circuit Court in 1863 and was to serve as Commissioner of the Revenue until such time as Stiles could resume his position.

Notes

¹ *Virginia's Local Executive Constitutional Officers in Historical Perspective*, The University of Virginia Newsletter, V. 58, No. 1, Institute of Government, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, September 1981.

² *Acts of the Virginia General Assembly 1786*, Richmond, VA.

³ Ibid 2.

⁴ Ibid 2.

⁵ Ibid 2.

⁶ Ibid 2.

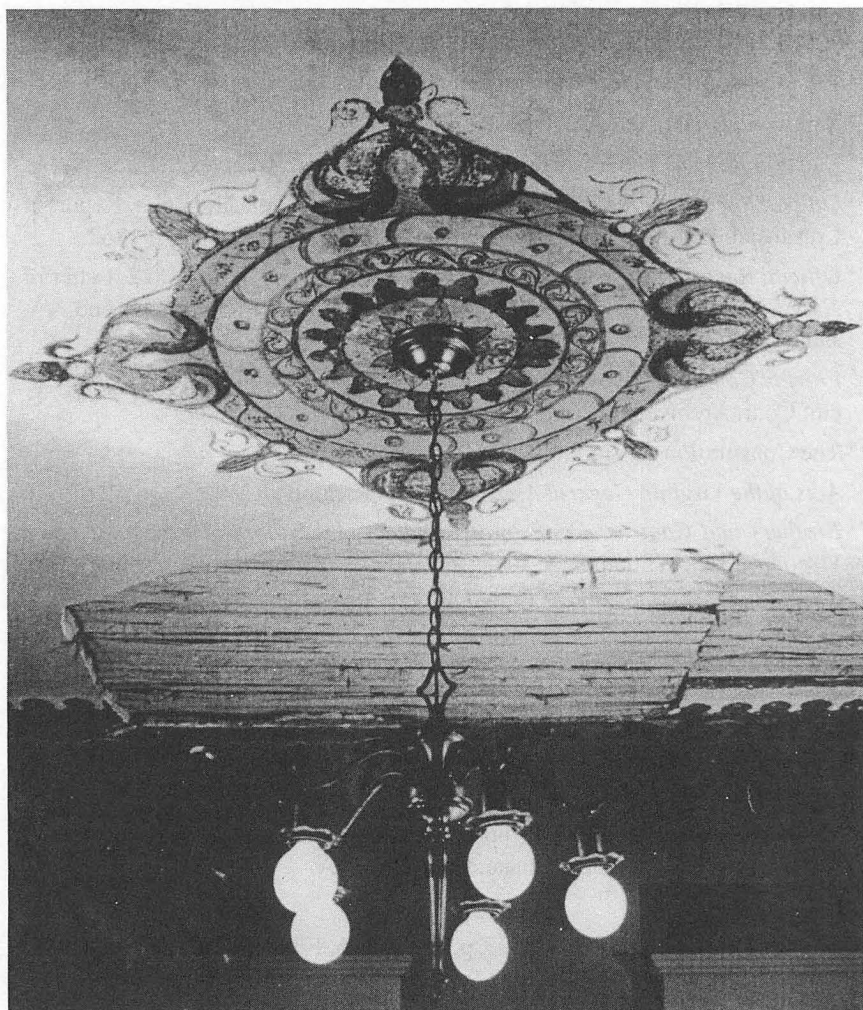
⁷ *Fairfax County Minute Book 1783*, p. 191, March 23, 1786, Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives, Fairfax, VA.

⁸ *Fairfax County Minute Book 1791*, p. D, November 20, 1792, Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives, Fairfax, VA.

- ⁹ *Fairfax County Minute Book 1792*, p. B, October 15, 1792, Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives, Fairfax, VA.
- ¹⁰ *Fairfax County Minute Book 1813*, p. 441, July 15, 1816, Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives, Fairfax, VA.
- ¹¹ *Fairfax County Minute Book 1852*, p. 268, June 21, 1854 & p. 333, December 18, 1854; Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives, Fairfax, VA.
- ^{11a} *Richmond Dispatch*, April 29, 1861, p. 3, c. 7.
- ¹² *Election Returns 1862*, Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives, Fairfax, VA.
- ¹³ *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Vol. 21, p. 694, Report of Col. Josiah H. Kellogg, 17th Pennsylvania Cavalry, December 27, 1862.
- ¹⁴ *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, Series II, Vol. 5, p. 822, Letter of Asst. Sec. of War J.A. Campbell to Brig. Gen. John H. Winder, Richmond, VA, January 27, 1863.
- ¹⁵ *Fairfax County Minute Book 1863*, p. 3, January 19, 1863, Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives, Fairfax, VA.
- ¹⁶ *The Constitution of Virginia 1870*, Richmond, VA.
- ¹⁷ *Acts of the Virginia General Assembly 1874*, Richmond, VA.
- ¹⁸ *Brothers and Cousins: Confederate Soldiers and Sailors of Fairfax County, Virginia*, 1995, William Page Johnson, II, Iberian Publishing Co., Athens, GA.
- ¹⁹ *Acts of the Virginia General Assembly 1871*, Richmond, VA.
- ²⁰ *Graham vs. Broadwater*, Fairfax County Chancery Suit, Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives, Fairfax, VA.
- ²¹ *Acts of the Virginia General Assembly 1906, 1908, 1910*, Richmond, VA.
- ²² *Acts of the Virginia General Assembly 1920*, Richmond, VA.
- ²³ *Acts of the Virginia General Assembly 1928, 1932, & 1934*, Richmond, VA.
- ²⁴ *Virginia Government in Brief*, pp. 42–48, May 1998, Clerk of the House of Delegates and Clerk of the Senate, Richmond, VA.
- ²⁵ *Ibid 2*.
- ²⁶ *Fairfax County Minute Book 1798*, p. E, April 16, 1798, Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives.

Additional Sources

Report of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, 1901–1952, Richmond, VA.
Fairfax County Personal Property and Land Tax Books, 1870–1919.



Front parlor chandelier with painted border on ceiling, 1971 photo. From the Virginiana Collection, Fairfax City Regional Library.

Lebanon Plantation

The Past on Pohick Creek

by
Edith Moore Sprouse

*A*s players return to the clubhouse on the Pohick Bay Golf Course, do they ever pause to wonder about its ancient brick architecture? Few will realize that this land was once called Lebanon Plantation, an early center of Methodist worship in Fairfax County or, more recently, a well-known nature preserve. Mary Catherine Birch, who visited there before the Civil War, has left an evocative picture of those earlier days.

Although it was not settled until the eighteenth century, the 500 acre tract was first patented on July 15, 1657 by John Gosnell. It was then described as being “in the Petomeck freshes beyond the land of Colonel Speake, above the Doegs Island...south easterly upon land called Newberrys.”¹ The title remained unclear for years. According to a letter written by George Mason on February 23, 1787, two other patents with the same description had been issued on the same day. He advised Colonel William Fitzhugh, the current owner of the land, to apply to the county court for a resurvey of the patent in order to resolve the conflicting lines. Mason mentioned Fitzhugh’s current tenants—John Saxton, Samuel Athey, and Charles Christmas—whose father had lived on the tract fifty years ago.²

Colonel Fitzhugh was probably the most aristocratic owner of the Lebanon property. He had vast holdings on both sides of the Potomac River. A veteran of the Cartagena campaign, along with Lawrence Washington of Mount Vernon, Fitzhugh was by 1782 the largest landowner in Calvert County, Maryland. He had moved from Virginia to Rousby Hall in Calvert County at the time of his marriage to the widow of John Rousby. Tradition has it that she refused his proposal four times before he gained her consent by a dramatic maneuver. Embarking in his boat after the last rejection, he seized Mrs. Rousby’s infant from its nurse’s arms, cast off from shore, and, holding the baby at arm’s length over the water, threatened to drown it in the Potomac if she would not marry him.³

William Fitzhugh followed the advice given him by Colonel Mason. After a resurvey of the land (inherited from his grandfather) in response to a court order of March 31, 1791, his title was reconfirmed. Three years

later he sold it to a syndicate from Georgetown, who divided the acreage.⁴ Despite a complicated series of transactions, this group retained control of a portion of the land until 1827. At that time, Thomas Bates purchased the 100 acres still in their hands.

About 1807 he had acquired some of the Fitzhugh tract from this same group; loss of the deed book in which that transaction was recorded makes it impossible to find the number of acres involved. This previous purchase of land on Pohick Creek was confirmed in his later purchase in 1816, which mentioned Bates' line in a description of the boundaries.⁵

One Edward Bates, a tailor, had leased 150 acres on the south side of Wolf Trap Branch in the eighteenth century. The lease covered his lifespan and that of his three sons, John, Edward, and Thomas. Whether this was the Edward Bates whose sons John and Edward had been born in Richmond County in 1735 and 1737 is not certain.⁶ After his death in 1761 his inventory listed such items as a "taylor's goose," one chair, three beds, a chest and a spinning wheel. His estate went to his wife Jane and son Edward.⁷

Little is known of this younger Edward except for the advertisement he placed in the *Alexandria Gazette* on February 6, 1804, for his missing "elegant gold watch, single case, on the back a representation of a cage and two birds...." He lived until 1812 or 1813 and left a larger estate valued at \$1109.04 to his nine children. His two sons, Edward and Thomas, were designated executors.⁸

On June 21, 1815, a notice appeared announcing his daughter's wedding: "Married at Lebanon on Thursday evening last by the Reverend Robbins, Mr. Thomas Morgan to Miss Sarah P. Bates, both of Fairfax County." This is the first direct mention of the Lebanon tract by name. Another daughter, Matilda was married on December 24, 1818, to Alexander W. Gossom.⁹

By 1815 Thomas Bates himself was prosperous enough to own two cut glass decanters. A special tax had been levied that year on certain personal property, in order to offset the costs of the War of 1812. The 1815 Personal Property Tax for Truro Parish, Fairfax County, showed that there were in his household two white males over the age of sixteen, six slaves, six horses and fourteen cattle. His mahogany pieces—a chest of drawers, bureau and table—as well as his decanters were taxed as luxury items.

He had purchased tracts on Pohick Creek in 1807 or 1808, in 1816, and again in 1827.¹⁰ Thomas was recognized as one of the early Methodists living on Mason Neck, according to an article written by a local historian in 1920:



Lebanon at the time of acquisition, showing wing. 1971 photo.

He who is called the ‘father of Methodism’ in the Gunston Neck of Virginia was Thomas Bates, an early owner of the farm Lebanon...Methodist services were held in the Lebanon barn by the pioneer Methodists of Northern Virginia. The old barn is no more, but its foundation can still be seen at Lebanon.¹¹

By the time he died in 1837 Thomas Bates had 13 slaves and an estate valued at \$4095. Instructing his executor (his son Edward L. Bates) not to sell the slaves, he left his estate to his wife Jane for her lifetime. When she died in 1845 Edward received two slaves, Dennis and Patsy, and \$1065.72 as his share of his father’s estate.¹² His land was offered for sale on November 18, 1845, as was his personal property. The 340-acre tract on Pohick Creek, “known as Lebanon,” had 120 acres in woods. There was “an excellent brick dwelling, kitchen, meat house and barn.” Since he placed the advertisement from Prince William County, it would appear that the executor was not yet living at Lebanon. Through a previous agreement, a relative put in a bid at the sale for \$2425 and then assigned the property to Edward L. Bates.¹³

Edward apparently was the other white male over 16 listed in Thomas Bates’s household in 1815. He married Martha Ann Wagener sometime before 1827 and spent the early years of married life on property which had

belonged to her father.¹⁴ Martha was the daughter of Peter Wagener, the third of that name. The Wagener family was prominent in county affairs. The first Peter Wagener had served as clerk of the Fairfax court from 1752 to 1772; his son Peter succeeded him from 1782 to 1798. The town of Colchester was built on a portion of their thousand-acre Stysted plantation.

Although they had no children of their own, Edward and Martha Bates often had young relatives visiting in the summer months. One of these relatives was the father of Julia Shreve Smith. Julia, who died in 1953 at 96 years of age¹⁵, remembered him telling her how one of the slaves was assigned to watch the younger children when the boys went fishing. The smallest child rode on his shoulders and fished from that lofty perch. Cousin Benjamin F. Ball, born in 1840, was only six years old at the time but vividly remembered those piggyback rides.

Another memory of Lebanon was the concern which its master had for his slaves. Although Bates may have had to mortgage his land, the thought of selling his slaves never crossed his mind. Their welfare was his responsibility. "Many a night he would pace the floor wondering how to provide food for them," recalled Benjamin Ball's daughter.¹⁶

The most complete picture of antebellum life on this plantation is found in the childhood memories of another of these visiting young relatives—Mary Catherine Shreve Birch, who was born in Colchester in September 1845. She was the daughter of Benjamin F. and Sarah Simpson Shreve, related on her mother's side to the Wagener family. At the age of twenty-four she married Edward J. Birch, a merchant in Falls Church.¹⁷ Through the courtesy of her descendants Mrs. John H. Ariail, Jr., and Mrs. Murray F. Rose, who are both members of the Historical Society, we are privileged to publish her account.

CHILDHOOD RECOLLECTIONS

as told by

Mary Catherine Shreve Birch

I have so often promised my children and grand-children to try and write some recollections of my early childhood, just as you tell them, you know, and though it will prove no easy task, I will begin.

I was quite small when my earliest remembrance of "Lebanon", Uncle Neddy Bates's home, began.

The farm was on Pohick Creek, which flows into the Potomac, and I think bordered on one side of Pohick Run, then a lovely deep-shaded stream, where we used to "pole" a small boat, and paddled and played

in its clear waters. Across the Creek we would row in a small boat through the “Wankapins”—I was laughed at for calling them “Water-lillies”—to another old home, that of my Mother’s cousin, “Sandy” Mackensie,¹⁸ a veritable Scotchman by nature as well as by name. How I loved to go there! His sister, Cousin Nannie, was a spinster and a typical Virginia one, so prim, so sweet. She used to bring little Georgie Mac. to the old Pohick Church and how prim and quiet we had to sit! Cousin Sandy’s wife was a Miss Chichester, Major John Chichester’s sister. How well I remember her sister, Miss Georgie C. She was tall and slender, with black eyes and hair and the skin one reads about. She married Mr. Machen of Virginia and I remember when I went to the Court House Fair and met her son.

“Uncle Neddy”—he was so called by all the neighborhood, it seems to me—was a stout, florid man, good-natured to a fault. I have no doubt he had weaknesses and faults, but we children did not know of them and surely did not look for them. I do not know just how many servants he owned, but he loved them, everyone who was employed at home, and never went into the house when we arrived until the last one had been found and duly greeted. He was kind and indulgent to them all as far as we know and I well remember once when Aunt Martha went around in tears and Uncle Neddy, with his hands behind his back, walked up and down, humming distractedly. Long after, I found the cause of their distress was because they thought they would have to sell all of the servants to meet a note he had gone security on. He could not say “No”, and I recollect now the Nevitts¹⁹ and many others who “came to dinner and stayed to tea” and for whom we children gave up our beds and slept on “pallets” on the floor. I cannot remember that we ever objected; it was all a piece of the family life of the times. I can see Uncle Neddy as he stood at the top of the steps leading from the dining room down into the paved Courtway across which was the kitchen and farther on was “Round House”, another large brick annex—servants’ homes. His hands, behind him clasped, held a huge red silk bandana, while he talked to Denis, a tall mulatto overseer, of the coming day’s work, and forgetting something, called out “Oh! Denis!”, as he turned to go.

A large hall ran, Virginia style, through the center of the house. On one side was the parlor and the “Preacher’s room”. I think I can recall the contents of each. There were printed curtains with landscapes, a bridge, figure, water, rocks and trees on them. There was a fireplace, brass andirons and fender, a long pier glass with gilt frame that was covered in summer with tissue paper, beautifully cut designs by the artistic fingers of “Old Miss Mary Kofen”,²⁰ a spinster of the family, whose appearance I vividly recall. Old fashioned chairs and tables, a

long sofa and fine pictures of General and Mrs. Washington, complete the parlor furniture for my recollections.

The bedroom had a Nestor bed, valanced and curtained, a fireplace with brass andirons and fender, a mantle with quaint ornaments and two brass candlesticks and over it silhouettes of past members and honored pastors of the family; a tall chest of drawers, in the drawers of which were scraps of pretty dresses, etc., and boxes that were touched and examined with awe and care; a small table with a Bible and Hymnbook thereon and old-fashioned chairs, upright, with gold band. How delighted we were when we could sleep sometimes “three in a bed” in that old “Preacher’s room”, and how often we giggled or fussed until Aunt Martha came in to settle us!

Opposite the parlor, the dining room held an immense table (it was needed), two corner “cupboards”, a great mahogany sideboard, in winter usually filled with glass and wherewithall to drink, fruit, etc. Behind the mirror on it was a large bunch of Peacock feathers for “John” to keep the flies from the table; a deep fireplace with bright brass andirons and a cheery blaze, a long, old-fashioned lounge and low rockers, with the dining room’s Noah’s Ark chairs completing the room.

Aunt Martha’s room came opposite the Preacher’s room; another tall bed, a great table with leaves to raise, chairs beside the fireplace, Uncle Neddy’s old-fashioned desk with its mysterious depths, a sort of storeroom in one end where bags of coffee, untoasted, and bags of brown sugar, etc., were. I can see Aunt Martha unlocking the storeroom from her bunch of keys and giving out to “Ellen”, the housekeeper, the needed supplies for the day.

Our long-boats went up to Alexandria, I think, loaded with cordwood, and brought back our groceries, and “John” and “Fanny”, with the other children, eagerly sought a lump of “Loaf Sugar” from the big lumps.

The hall ran back down two big stone steps into the yard and garden. Rows of beehives were down one side. Flowers bordered the walk that ran down the the “privy”, hidden behind pear trees and privet bushes. The vegetables were on each side and I can see Uncle Neddy enjoying his fresh lettuce and onions for his breakfast—he was quite an epicure. Nothing pleased him so much as to have the men at work “down by the Creek” drop rake and hoe and track a big turtle to her nest and after she had laid her eggs, turn her over on her back, secure the eggs and then proceed to attend to the turtle. His share was the eggs and her hind legs, deliciously cooked, white and appetizing. Those were days of plenty and, I reckon, wastefulness.

The front yard had two big locust trees with latticed honeysuckle around them and the path ran to the gate with the horseblock on one side and the woodpile on the other. To the left was the view of the Creek and the path to the quarters. Oh! what a delight when we could run away and eat with Ellen or Patsy in their nice, clean little homes! And take off our shoes and stockings and make steps in the sandy banks! This was the way that led to the wood landing and on to the old stranded long-boat, from which we fished with Uncle Neddy and the children—black and white—and caught perch, eels, sunfish and “bacca-boxes”, while up and down, the face of the cliffs were resplendent with mountain laurel, pink and white and wholly beautiful. We reached the barn after dining beside a wood and turning into the lane with cherry trees on each side, and oh the delight of tumbling from the loft to the mow and trembling when we heard the mutterings of the old brindle bull out in the field, where we used to go with Uncle Neddy to “salt the Sheep”, “Conan, Conanee”.

There were lots of cherries. Aunt Martha sat all day seeding by hand, while we all picked. They were packed in great cheese boxes and kept in the little “cuddy-closets” along the lower sides of the half-stories upstairs. There was a “picket” fence around the yard, where Mary Ann’s pet pig used to get through. He bit me on the ankle one day when I was sitting on the steps that led down in the Courtyard and did not feed him his butter fast enough.

From the right of the house a path ran down the hill on one side of which was the Duck Pond. The Pond was usually alive with ducks and geese, paddling, screaming, fluttering and preening. On the other side was the “smoke” or “meat house” and a path that led on to cherry trees and on to Pohick Run. At the bottom of the hill was an enclosure of pine poles protecting a spring of delicious water, from which all that was used at the house was taken up in large wooden “Piggins” on the heads of the women. And a wooden bucketful, with a long-handled gourd, always sat on a high bench in one corner of the Court out of the reach of the “pack”, and I really ought to mention the dogs. Let me see can I remember some of the names. There was “Hector”, a great, shaggy Collie, I think; “Driver”, “Juno”, and “Fashion”, the white one who bit Aunt Alice over the eyebrow when she hid where the puppies were.

This is a description of old Lebanon in the days I remember and though it may not be interesting to you, it will serve to show old customs and habits. On Sundays Uncle Neddy used to have “Jack” harness “George” and “Bill” to the carriage and take us all to old Pohick Church. After fifty odd years it was my privilege to again visit the honored structure. The same old Braunaugh²¹ Tombstones were back

of it, but a later graveyard had been laid out in front where the parishioners and pastors had been laid to rest. Inside the plan and arrangements were the same; happily nothing had been changed. I sat again in "Washington's Pew", where my childish feet used to "stick straight out" and the Minister could be heard and not seen. Dear Cousin Nannie Mackensie! How prim and sweet she was; how quiet George and I used to have to sit! I gathered some ivy from the wall. It is growing, but the memories gather fast! We went on past old "Lewis Chapel" where we used to go to Sunday School. Aunt Mary and Uncle Henry Simpson are buried there. Then on to old "Gunston", now famous historically as the family home of the Masons. It is now owned by Mr. Louis Hertle of Chicago, by whom we were most kindly greeted, but though he most kindly insisted that I search memory's store for familiar sights and locations, so much had it changed, so prodigal and so luxurious were the appointments he had made, that I found it difficult to recall the old scenes of my childhood. The old "English Lawn Grass" was the same, a few of the stately cedars left. The "Dormer" windows and the little front porch were there. The great box bushes were as green as ever, but inside only the fireplaces, walls and floors by their thickness looked familiar. Such beautiful rugs, tables, chairs and piano! Such lovely china in the old "Corner Cupboards" that my bewildered mind refused to respond!

Gunston Hall lies beautifully on the Potomac and played such an important part in the old days. How delightful to think that such a man has the will and the means to beautify such a place!

The idyllic life described by Mary Catherine did not survive the Civil War. Both Edward Bates and his wife Martha were dead. He had not been well when he wrote his will in July 1848 but, "wishing to settle my worldly affairs camly (*sic*) and in my proper senses," he proceeded to devise his estate to his wife for her lifetime. His servant Dennis was, after five years, to be paid wages "until he has money enough to take himself to a free state." The estate would pass to his sisters after Martha's death. He died some time before September 1863 for it was noted at that session of the Fairfax Court that Bates had been dead for more than three months. His will was admitted to probate in October 1865.²² Martha apparently predeceased him, for her name was not mentioned in the settlement of his estate.

While his personal property was sold promptly and without incident, the division of Bates's land loosed a hornet's nest of dissent among the heirs. His sisters argued that he had retained slaves bequeathed to them in their father's will, and withheld their wages.

A chancery suit was then filed by the heirs. Among the exhibits were letters from prospective purchasers. An advertisement in 1879 mentioned that the land was immediately contiguous to tidewater and had "a large brick dwelling now needing repairs...the land is well timbered and affords a fine opportunity for speculation." The court ruled in 1871 that the land be sold, but this was not accomplished until 1879. The final report of the Commissioners on September 30, 1880, stated that Edward Bates had 352 1/2 acres of land valued at \$15 per acre. Its total value was \$5287.50.²³

In March 1880 the court approved the sale of the land to Edward Daniels, who then assigned 250 acres, including the house, to George Erskine of Washington, D.C. The tract was sold in 1901 to William Dunn, in 1908 to Henry B. Lapham, and in 1913 to Mary S. Miller.²⁴

It was during the Millers' ownership that another glimpse of Lebanon's surroundings appeared, when an article in *The Sunday Star* described the approach from Gunston Road:

A long lane, each side of it fringed with fresh young maples, stretches from the main road and through fields of corn and potatoes toward the house. About two hundred yards of lane between the maples and it leads between two rows of dark green and solemn cedars...soon the lane turns to the left and passes the stable, barn and corn house and leads to the garden of the old brick house.²⁵

Mary Miller and her husband owned Lebanon until 1942. The new owners were naturalist Paul Bartsch and his wife Dr. Elizabeth Parker. Bartsch, nearing retirement from the Smithsonian Institution, restored the house and developed the farm into a wildlife sanctuary. He added many varieties of ferns and other plants. Author Louis Halle recalled his visit to Lebanon:

An old wagon track leads down and down through the woods of Virginia pine...at the bottom of the slope lies a long open marsh sunk into the woods, with trees wading out from the borders ankle-deep in bog water. Here, overlooking the marsh, is a slight elevation with ancient gnarled beeches, and tumbled rocks to sit on, a Wagnerian stage setting.²⁶

Roger Tory Peterson, the eminent naturalist, stated in the foreword to Halle's book that the enjoyment of such wildlife sanctuaries as Lebanon is not necessarily confined to nature hobbyists alone. "It is wrong to think of birds and nature as something for odd people who are interested in birds and nature...birds and nature represent the basic world in which we live. The observation of them, consequently, is essential to an understanding of that world."

As the years went on, another type of outdoorsman was drawn to this land. After the deaths of Dr. and Mrs. Bartsch, the Nature Conservancy in 1969 acquired Lebanon Plantation to prevent it from being developed, and retained it until funds became available for purchase by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority as part of the Pohick Bay Regional Park. This purchase was completed in 1972.²⁷ After a decade of planning, the Park Authority voted in January 1979 to build an eighteen-hole golf course on the upland portions of the tract. The wooded ridges and the extensive marshes on Pohick Creek would remain undisturbed.²⁸

Pohick Bay Golf Course, designed by the well-known architect George Cobb, opened on June 24, 1982. The brick residence of the Bates family, its interior much modified, became the clubhouse. In 1998 a snack bar was added across the rear of the house. Although Edward and Martha Ann Bates would not recognize much of their land, more than 75 percent of its natural features have been preserved to provide much-needed open space in Fairfax County in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Notes

¹ Nell Marion Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia land patents and grants 1623–1800*. Richmond, VA: Dietz Press, 1934:352.

² Beth Mitchell, *Beginning at a White Oak...Patents and Northern Neck Grants of Fairfax County, Virginia*. Fairfax, VA: Office of Comprehensive Planning, 1977:50–56.

³ Charles Francis Stein, *A History of Calvert County, Maryland*. Baltimore, MD: Calvert County Historical Society, 1960:116.

⁴ Fairfax County Deed Book Y:120. Deed of June 26, 1795, conveying tracts from William Fitzhugh to Richard Parrott, James Blake, and Anthony Benning.

⁵ Fairfax County Deed Book H2:99 (1807–1808) is missing. The 1816 transaction from Robert T. Thompson to Thomas Bates is in Deed Book O2:118.

⁶ “Births, Marriages, and Deaths in Richmond County,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Series 1, Vol.13:131 (1904).

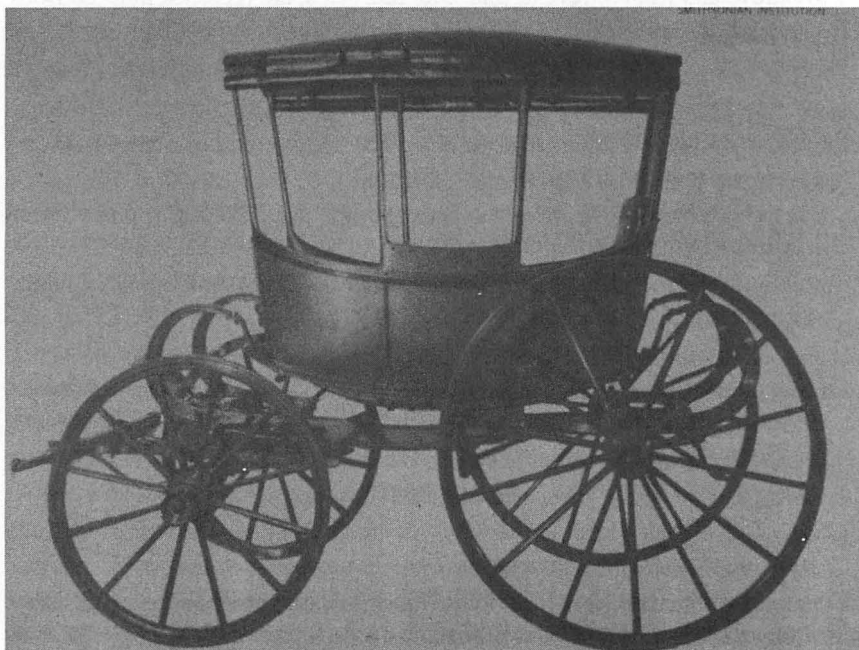
⁷ Fairfax County Will Book B:332,335. The will was presented for probate on June 15, 1761.

⁸ Fairfax County Will Book K:90,257.

⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 7, 1819.

¹⁰ Fairfax County Deed Book X2:264. Deed dated December 10, 1827, conveying 100 acres from William Campbell to Thomas Bates.

- ¹¹ "The Rambler Writes More of Lewis Chapel and early Methodism," *The Sunday Star*, August 22, 1920.
- ¹² Fairfax County Will Book S:227. Thomas's will was dated March 18, 1837 and was presented for probate on June 20, 1837. His inventory is listed on p. 486. Jane Bates left no will but her inventory, in Will Book U:371, was dated March 16, 1846.
- ¹³ The sale account of Thomas Bates, deceased, is in Will Book U:373. The advertisement appeared in the *Gazette* on October 22, 1845. The deeds from Bates to Shreve and from Shreve to Bates, for 352 acres, are recorded in Deed Book L3:55,57.
- ¹⁴ Fairfax County Deed Book X2:264. For the Wagener family, see Edith M. Sprouse's *Colchester: Colonial Port on the Potomac*.
- ¹⁵ Interview with Barbara Rose, May 20, 1968.
- ¹⁶ Interview with Mary Washington Ball Johnson, May 12, 1968. Her father remembered seeing the decorated ceiling in the parlor, thought to have been painted by two Hessian soldiers.
- ¹⁷ Melvin Lee Steadman, Jr., *Falls Church by Fence and Fireside*. Falls Church, VA: Falls Church Public Library, 1964:270,422,423.
- ¹⁸ Alexander McKenzie (1819–1879) owned 200 acres on the east side of Pohick Creek. He married Mary Elizabeth, daughter of Captain George Chichester. Her sister was the wife of James P. Machen of Walney plantation, Fairfax County.
- ¹⁹ The Nevitt family lived on Telegraph Road at Newington and White Marsh, near Pohick Church.
- ²⁰ Mary Coffey was related to the Bates family through the Simpson side of the family. Peter Wagener II had married Ann Simpson.
- ²¹ Jeremiah Bronaugh (1707–1749) leased part of Gunston from his relative George Mason III. His tombstone has been moved to Pohick Church.
- ²² Fairfax County Court Order Book 1863:30. The inventory, in Will Book Z:376, was valued at only \$759.84; the sale account is in Will Book A2:207.
- ²³ Fairfax County Chancery File #46, *Hunter vs. Bates*.
- ²⁴ Fairfax County Deed Books Y4:403,419; I6:229; A7:91 and Q7:60 record these transactions. The deed from Claude E. Miller, widower, to Elizabeth Parker Bartsch is in Deed Book 391:289.
- ²⁵ "The Rambler visits Gunston Neck and writes of the House of Lebanon," *The Sunday Star*, August 15, 1920.
- ²⁶ Louis J. Halle, *Spring in Washington*. New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1957:80ff.
- ²⁷ *The Evening Star*, November 29, 1972.
- ²⁸ *The Washington Post*, December 28, 1978; January 19, 1979; and June 30, 1982.



John drove the Lee's coach to Virginia from Philadelphia. It was probably similar to this restored c. 1810 coach from the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. Reprinted from Gamble, R.S., Sully: The Biography of a House, Sully Foundation Ltd., Chantilly, 1973, p. 47. Used with permission of the Smithsonian Institution.

“Old John” In Search of His Story

by
Jeanne Niccolls

Ms. Niccolls is the Collections Manager for the Fairfax County Park Authority. This article stems from research conducted over the years on African-Americans who lived at Sully or who were associated with the Richard Bland Lee family between 1746 and 1853. Other researchers who have investigated this topic deserve acknowledgment. They are Hale Ament, Maureen Bray, Barbara Farner, Robert Gamble, Noreen McCann, Deborah Robison, Richard Sacchi, A. T. Stephens, and the staff of Sully Historic Site.

John, or “Old” John, is mentioned more frequently than any other slave in surviving Richard Bland Lee family documents—yet we know almost nothing directly about him or indeed about any of the other African-Americans who lived at Sully in western Fairfax County. While a few details can be gleaned from existing sources, there is no known oral or written account of John in which his own voice survives. Yet, when we place surviving documentation concerning Lee’s slaves against the background of what has been learned about late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century slave life elsewhere in Virginia, elements of John’s individual story begin to take shape.

John was one of over fifty African-Americans who, between 1746 and 1811, lived on the tract of land first called the “Salsberry plain Quarter” [sic] and later “Sully”.¹ When the first Henry Lee made his will apportioning slaves and property to his sons in 1746, nine African-Americans (including Henny, who may have been John’s mother) were already living there.² Essentially pioneers, they were the first to clear the land, prepare it for cultivation and erect the structures needed to store crops, house livestock and shelter themselves.

Ownership of the plantation and slaves passed to Colonel Henry Lee (Henry Lee II) in 1747.³ Over the next forty years he expanded the agricultural activities and development of the Quarter, sending more enslaved

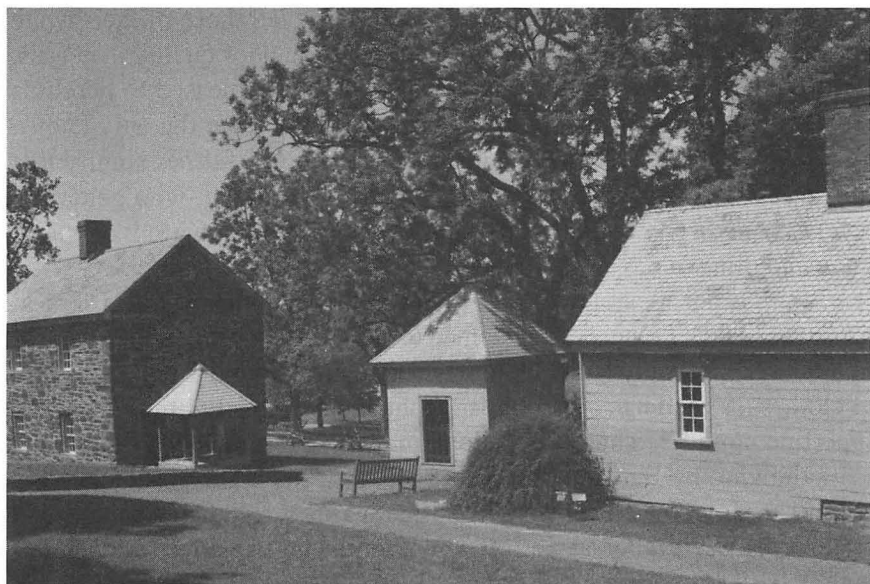
African-Americans to live on the tract. Most likely, John grew up at the Salisbury Plain Quarter or was sent there from Leesylvania, Lee's estate in Prince William County. A "John" appears on the Loudoun County lists of Colonel Henry Lee's tithables for the years 1771 through 1785.⁴

Richard Bland Lee acquired portions of the improved property he called "Sully" from his father in 1784 and on his death in 1787.⁵ "John of Henny," valued at 80 pounds sterling, was one of twenty-nine slaves assigned to Richard Bland Lee in the 1787 division of Colonel Henry Lee's estate.⁶ By 1809 John had a wife named Alice and eight children.⁷

According to tax records, "Alice" lived at the Salisbury Plain Quarter from 1782-1785.⁸ In 1787 Colonel Henry Lee willed Alice to his wife, Lucy Grymes Lee, for the rest of her life. After her death in 1792 the remainder of Lee's estate was divided. Alice was assigned to another son, Theodorick Lee. Sometime between 1792 and 1795, Theodorick sold his property which adjoined Sully and moved west to Jefferson County. Richard Bland Lee could have acquired Alice from his brother during that time, or else John's wife was another person by the same name.

When he sold Sully in 1811, Lee moved his family and some of his slaves to Alexandria and sent others to work on his Langley estate. In 1813 John was with the Lees at Briar Hill outside Alexandria. Though his position is never specifically identified, close examination of surviving documents suggests that John served in a domestic role and further reveals that he also acted as the Lee's coachman, messenger and courier, all occupations that required many talents.

John's apparent familiarity with the outward conventions of polite society is one indication that at least some duties required his presence in the main house, where gentry behavior could be closely observed. Cornelia Lee in Alexandria described to Mrs. Lee, "The meeting between us was diverting, 'how do you do my dear Mistress' and 'how do you do John,' with a cordial shake of the hand and innumerable bows, and a few Curtsies on my part."⁹ From Stratford, Ann Lee wrote, "Why would you not...favour me with a line or two by John? he seemed to think it necessary to make an apology for you and declared you had not been informed of the trip till the moment of his setting out...He appeared very anxious to vindicate you from the imputation of neglect...and said, 'it was true master did not often do anything of such particular consequence without consulting Mistress'."¹⁰ The style and quality of a slave's clothing largely depended on his or her duties and their perceived importance and visibility in the white community. Thus clothing could serve as an indicator of status.¹¹ While the actual

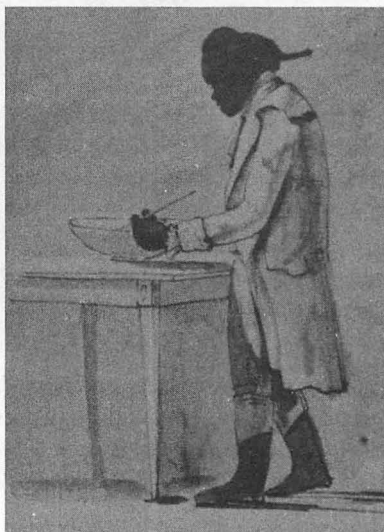


African-Americans once worked in these outbuildings, which still stand at Sully today. Top photo, from left, stone dairy, smokehouse, and a portion of the kitchen. Bottom photo, a corner of the kitchen garden that is behind the kitchen and the smokehouse. The well house in the top photo is a reconstruction.

garments worn by most slaves in Virginia resembled those of their white owners, they were generally made of inexpensive, poor quality materials. Lee asked his brother-in-law, Zaccheus Collins, "Be pleased to purchase [John] a pair of cheap thin boots..."¹² Although they are the only known articles of clothing associated with John, these boots further signify that his duties were considered above those of a field slave, who generally received only a pair of cheap, ill-fitting shoes to wear with a suit of coarse linen and thin wool.¹³

John's other apparel may have been similar to another of Lee's domestic slaves. Aleck Francis, "accustomed to wait at table, and do the business of a house," probably had with him when he ran away in 1815, "a variety of clothes...a good hat, a pair of dark pantaloons, and a light frock coat of superfine cloth."¹⁴ Thus attired, John may have resembled "Alic" in the 1797 drawing by Benjamin Henry Latrobe. In his highly visible role as coachman, John may have worn even finer garments, like those made and repaired by Lee's tailor, James McAlpin, for the un-named servant attending Richard Bland Lee at Congress in Philadelphia: "a Stript Nankeen Coat" with matching vest, "a fine flannel Vest faced with Silk," "a Surtout" and "3 pairs Breeches."¹⁵ Such fashionable clothing approximated the suits of livery worn by slaves of the wealthiest Virginians as symbols of their owner's elevated status.¹⁶ A well-dressed waiting man and coachman enhanced the image of the owner's stature in the Anglo-American gentry community.¹⁷

Alic, a faithful & humorous old Servant belonging to Mr. Bathurst Jones of Hanover, November 3, 1797. Figure 32 reprinted from The Virginia Journals of Benjamin Henry Latrobe: 1795–1798. Volume 2. Edward C. Carter II, editor, The Maryland Historical Society, 1977.



Generally speaking, slaves traveled only with permission from their owners. Though most had limited opportunities to leave the plantation, a few African-Americans from Sully appear to have regularly traveled about the countryside and in and out of Alexandria, transporting crops to market, conducting errands and carrying messages, parcels and gifts to neighbors. From Alexandria Cornelia Lee reported, "Ludwell has just arrived to let me know Mr. Shivelley has not brought my trunk.." ¹⁸ and Portia Hodgson alerted Mrs. Lee, "The Bottle of Mint Water & your Basket shall be left...for any of your People that may call." ¹⁹ One unpredictable March day in 1809 Mrs. Lee complained, "Such has been the weather and roads...that a Servant could not get to Centreville without difficulty." ²⁰ Delivering messages and running errands offered some enslaved African-Americans opportunities to leave home and escape supervision for a short time, perhaps with the added benefit of visits with friends and relatives along the way.

John seems to have been routinely charged with missions to neighbors in Fairfax County and Alexandria as well as farther afield. Not only did he carry letters and packages from the Lees to relatives and friends but he also brought messages and goods back to Sully. "John will take up the Walnuts etc" remarked William Hodgson from Alexandria. ²¹ In Washington, Ann Lee Jones enumerated a list of errands: "Old John will take you the hummums [sacking material] you wrote for...and a small remnant of Seeded Cambrick...also I have sent a small parcel for Aunt Lucy...Old John will take you a glass Jar for my quinces and a small pot...to fill [with butter]..." ²² From Hope Park Eleanor Stuart penned a note to Mrs. Lee, "Coming out of my Garden last Night, I was much pleased to meet My old Friend John at the door with my butter print and Ladle." ²³

Certainly missives sent back with the servant, or independently by the mail stage, served as informal reassurances that errands had been carried out as directed and as checks on a slave's movements. Cornelia Hopkins wrote, "I hope Harry told you he put your Last in the Post Office and that I knew not of it until he had left town." ²⁴ "Thee must thank John for the long letter...He performed very well," Mary Collins assured her daughter, Elizabeth Collins Lee. ²⁵

In mid-November of 1801 John was entrusted with the special task of traveling to Philadelphia to pick up the Lee's new carriage from Zaccheus Collins (Mrs. Lee's brother) and drive it back to Sully. ²⁶ To get to Philadelphia, John could have traveled by stage coach or ridden to Philadelphia on one of the carriage horses. ²⁷ "Give us ample notice when John may start..." asked Elizabeth Lee, "I expected to have heard from Mother on the

subject...and of taking advantage of the carriage and John to come spend the Winter with us.”²⁸ Collins gave John \$25.00 “to defray his expenses home with carriage.”²⁹ In a separate letter he advised the Lees of John’s progress: “On Tuesday last at noon, Old John was dispatched with the carriage, and he was at Witmers 9 miles on this side of Lancaster yesterday morning—’ere reaching Sully, I trust he will be arrived safely with his charge.”³⁰ Someone must have informed Collins of John’s arrival at Witmers [probably a tavern or livery stable]. Without mishap, the journey would have taken about five days.

The following summer, John again traveled to Philadelphia. Lee directed, “Two days rest in Philadelphia will I hope be sufficient for John—unless Mrs. Collins will avail herself of this opportunity of visiting Virginia. In that case he has orders to wait her leisure.”³¹ “John is making ready to start tomorrow morning—sooner he could not well have gone,” replied Zaccheus Collins, adding: “I have delivered to John thirty dollars to ensure him safely along.”³² In 1806 Lee rode part way to Philadelphia with his family and then apparently sent notice on ahead to Collins: “Mrs. Lee and the children...will proceed on with all possible expedition to Colombia. I feel much concern in being about to separate from them here [Fredericktown, Maryland] and to commit them to our Faithful John.”³³

John traveled alone on long journeys across unfamiliar landscape, which required a good sense of direction, an accurate memory, and perhaps an ability to read written instructions. He carried money, and presumably had to count out fees for road tolls, ferries, horses’ feed and stabling, etc. Although the majority of slaves in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Virginia could not read and write, some were literate. John could have learned reading and arithmetic from another slave or perhaps from Mrs. Lee or her children. Brought up as a Quaker, Elizabeth Collins Lee “kept school” for at least some of the slaves at Sully: “The little room call’d old Mistresses room is in readiness every morning where I keep school for an hour... [for] the Black part of the pupils...”³⁴

Driving a carriage required experience and skill, as well as resourcefulness when fording swollen streams and negotiating roads that were alternately a series of dusty ruts or a sea of mud. Clearly John was an able driver or he would not have been sent so far from home by himself with a costly vehicle and horses, and certainly would not have been charged with transporting family members and goods long distances. John probably traveled by horseback or horse-drawn vehicle to get to Stratford, Alexandria, and Washington. Such journeys called for a capable and proficient

hand to command and care for the horses and vehicles with which he was entrusted.

Members of the Lee family and even their friends voiced their approbation of John. Ann Calvert Stuart wrote Mrs. Lee, "I wish you had another old John or that I had one to lend you..."³⁵ On another occasion she begged, "Pray come. Old John can take Miss Lee [Ann Matilda, age two] on a pillow..."³⁶ They considered him faithful and trustworthy, seemingly awarded him favored status, permitted him to handle money, and let him travel alone far from home. He did not have to "take the Philadelphia road" (a euphemism for running away to the free state of Pennsylvania); he was sent there by the Lees.³⁷ With his own skills and the social networks he had no doubt established during his travels, John had all the ingredients for a successful attempt at vanishing into urban free black society.³⁸ Yet he resisted what must have been inviting opportunities to take flight from slavery.

We can only speculate as to his motivation in doing so. Age may have been a factor for "Old" John, making life as a fugitive too daunting a prospect. But, most likely, he simply could not bear to leave his wife and children. One of the greatest agonies of slavery was the fearsome prospect of being sold and separated from one's family. Some African-Americans ran away to avoid this very situation or to return to their families after being sold and parted from them. Escaping to freedom while leaving family members in slavery must have been equally wrenching.

Besides laws designed to restrict the movement of slaves, white society maintained informal networks that made escape all the more difficult.³⁹ Family, friends and neighbors might report a slave's activities and movements to the owner. In the countryside and small towns most people knew one another; unfamiliar faces were noticed and remarked upon. Newspaper descriptions of runaway slaves reached farther afield. Two of Richard Bland Lee's slaves thus advertised, Ludwell and Aleck Francis, were ultimately recaptured.⁴⁰ What might appear to have been a good opportunity to take flight was in fact a very risky situation. Precisely because he was exposed to such opportune circumstances, John's movements may have been observed more closely than usual.

Life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries posed other, more routine, risks. Especially for slaves, living conditions invited disease and infection. Accounts of fevers and epidemics were common. Richard Bland Lee announced in midsummer of 1802, "Dysentaria afflictions have prevailed much for the last month, tho...yielding immediately to medicine.

My family has hitherto escaped except in one or two instances among the blacks.”⁴¹ Earlier that year Mrs. Lee reported, “we were threatened with the measles. It has been in the family, as many as four of the servants & some children....They have as yet escaped and it does not appear to spread in the family.”⁴²

Slaves were usually treated by their owners, who had an investment in keeping them healthy, and sometimes by doctors. During epidemics and outbreaks of disease, the Lees nursed their slaves in the main house. Weathering an outbreak of measles, Mrs. Lee “did not keep them [her children] from the room where one of the nurses had it, but while able she dress’d & undress’d them...”⁴³ When illness struck her Alexandria household in 1804, Cornelia Lee remarked, “What with black & white the house has been a complete Hospital.”⁴⁴ Living in urban Washington years later, where “they took no slaves in at the Hospital...,”⁴⁵ Mrs. Lee called a doctor and put Margery, ill with cholera, to bed in the garret.

And so on one hot day in August of 1813 an anxious Elizabeth Collins Lee took up her pen to report the devastating effects of “the fever”⁴⁶ on their household at Briar Hill, where “From having no place for the sick but in the House they are spread in every direction.”⁴⁷ She wrote, “Tho it has not been so immediately fatal there is no such thing as raising the Patient from a state near Death. Blisters and [wine] Rum being the only things that appear to keep them alive—I left eleven out of fifteen very ill and the man by the name of Harry who drove us down to Alexandria not expected to live an hour having the sickness for many hours—also Patty...equally ill both of whose burials were directed. To my astonishment Mr. Lee writes me that Harry is not only alive but there is some little change for the Better...seven out of the number are *very ill* among which is Kitty who was taken since I left home—he observed that the fate of most of them is very doubtful. I have not heard for three days and every thing to fear not only for our poor domestics but for my Husband who is obligated to stand by them or they would certainly suffer.” She continued, “Our old faithful friend and Servant John died two days ago leaving every member of his family ill.”⁴⁸

John died in that yellow fever epidemic, but what of the rest of his family? A few years earlier, in January of 1809, John’s family consisted of himself, his wife Alice, and their eight children: Patty, Betty, Henry, Charles, John, Margaret, Milly and Frank.⁴⁹ Patty and Betty were “young women,” Henry was “about fourteen,” and Charles was a boy “about twelve years old” in April of 1813.⁵⁰ Following John’s death, there is no further word of Alice, Charles, Betty, or Margaret.

Patty must have been at least in her late teens in 1802, when Lee offered "Elliet, the son of Patty," then five years old, to Zaccheus Collins.⁵¹ When Ann Collins visited the Lees, Patty "wash'd for" her. In 1813 Patty was taken with yellow fever, the same illness that caused her father's death. She was so ill that her burial was already directed. "Poor Patty still lingers, tho with...little hope,"⁵² lamented Elizabeth Collins Lee in a letter to her brother. Evidently Patty survived. In Washington in 1832, Mrs. Lee's slave, Margery, who had been missing for several weeks, "was found...at Patty's with every symptom of cholera..."⁵³

In June of 1817, Henry and John were considered "valuable young men," Frank "a valuable boy" and Milly a "valuable girl."⁵⁴ John seems to have followed in his father's footsteps and mastered the skill of driving a carriage, as is suggested in an incident Mrs. Lee related to her brother in 1821: "Poor John the only one down—he has never been about since you saw him—by the time his leg enabled him to get on the carriage after everything was fixed for him—and he gave us one ride—he was that night taken with a fever of which he is only now free tho feeble—making his confinement three months—and ours the more certain...all our hope now is that John will be well enough to drive them [the children] out..."⁵⁵

Sometime in 1818, Richard Bland Lee sold "A certain female coloured girl slave named Milly," with her increase, for \$300.00 to his friend, General John P. Van Ness of the city of Washington, District of Colombia. As Milly was actually the legal property of Mrs. Lee by the terms of a deed of trust, Richard Bland Lee conveyed a pianoforte and a mantle clock to his wife as substitutes for "the very valuable slave Milly."⁵⁶

Like his father, Frank was sent on errands. Mrs. Lee wrote her niece, "I send Frank in to inquire how you are..."⁵⁷ When she visited her brother in Philadelphia in 1830, Frank went to stay with her daughter, Ann Matilda Washington, who reported, "Frank I believe is doing well, John says he has 'no fault with him'..."⁵⁸ From Philadelphia again the following year, Mrs. Lee wrote, "...do tell my servants to remember and let me meet them with thanks and pleasure. They know my anxiety for them...Tell Frank I am very glad to hear he is going to be a steady respectable servant."⁵⁹ In June of 1836 both Frank and son John were still "in the possession of Elizabeth Collins Lee."⁶⁰ Frank remained with Elizabeth Collins Lee for the rest of her life, when he was finally rewarded with his freedom: "And in consideration of the good conduct and fidelity of my negro man, Frank Madison, and my woman Caroline, my only remaining slaves, I hereby emancipate them, and recommend them to the care and protection of my children."⁶¹

By then nearly forty-five years old,⁶² Frank may have been the only member of John's family to taste the sweet breath of freedom.

In searching for the story of "Old" John, certain elements stand out. He lived all or nearly all of his life in Fairfax County. He was able to travel across the landscape from northern Virginia east to Alexandria and Washington, north to Philadelphia and southeast to Stratford, and the boundaries of his world were perhaps broader than those of most enslaved African-Americans of his time, who rarely traveled very far from home. Certainly he possessed a skilled hand with horses and vehicles and probably he was literate and knew at least some arithmetic. John may have passed on some of this knowledge and experience to his children, perhaps hoping they would some day have the opportunity to use his legacy as free men and free women.

Notes

¹ The property called *Sully* lies in present-day western Fairfax County. One hundred and twenty acres of the original tract have been preserved as a historic site.

² Will of Henry Lee, July 30, 1746, Westmoreland County Deeds and Wills, Book 10, p. 367. 'Henny' also appears on the Loudoun County Tithables Lists for the years 1762–1783.

³ Division of the Estate of Henry Lee II, December 24, 1787, Prince William County Deed Book X, p. 129. In court records Henry Lee II is often referred to as "Colonel Henry Lee."

⁴ This property lay in Loudoun County from 1757 until 1798, when the county line was redrawn and it became part of Fairfax County. Seventeen hundred and eighty-five was the last year any tithables were listed for Colonel Henry Lee or Richard Bland Lee; 1786 was the last year tithables were recorded by name in Loudoun County. Because last names of slaves were rarely used in these lists, there is no absolute certainty that John was the same person as the one listed. Later personal property tax records suggest that, until they reached age twelve, children were not taxed and thus their names did not appear on tithables lists. If John was the same person listed and if this age limit was true for earlier tithables lists, he could have been born and raised at the Salisbury Plain Quarter. If he was twelve in 1771, when he first appears on the tithables list, he could have been born in 1759.

⁵ Loudoun County Court Order Book H, p. 208; Prince William County Will Book G, pp. 373–377, 391–392.

⁶ Division of the Estate of Henry Lee II, December 24, 1787, Prince William County Deed Book X, p. 129.

- ⁷ Bank of the United States, Appellant, versus E. Lee, E.J. Lee, and Richard Smith, Supreme Court of the United States, No. 24, p. 17, 23–24. Marriages between slaves were not recognized as legally valid contracts. Yet some legal documents from this period occasionally identify a slave as the husband or wife of another slave.
- ⁸ Loudoun County Tithables Lists, 1757–1787.
- ⁹ Cornelia Lee to Elizabeth Collins Lee, April 23, 1803, National Society of Colonial Dames of America Collection, Portia and Cornelia Lee Letters, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.
- ¹⁰ Ann Lee to Elizabeth Collins Lee, February 18, 1799, Richard Bland Lee Collection, 1799–1827, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- ¹¹ Baumgarten, Linda, “Clothes for the People,” *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, Vol. XIV, Number 2, November, 1988, pp. 38, 43.
- ¹² Richard Bland Lee to Zaccheus Collins, July 3, 1802, Daniel Parker Papers, 1795–1804, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Letter Book of Zaccheus Collins, Entry July 16, 1802, Daniel Parker Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Zaccheus Collins Account Book, Entry July 14, 1802, Daniel Parker Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
- ¹³ Baumgarten, pp. 41–45; Walsh, Lorena S., *From Calabar to Carters Grove, The History of a Virginia Slave Community*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997, p. 190.
- ¹⁴ “Fifty Dollars Reward,” *The Virginia Gazette and Alexandria Advertiser*, January 6, 1807, The Lloyd House, Alexandria, Virginia; “100 Dollars Reward,” *Alexandria Gazette*, June 20, 1815, The Lloyd House, Alexandria, Virginia.
- ¹⁵ The Honorable Richard Bland Lee’s Account with James McAlpin, Custis-Lee Papers, 1711–1924, Item #465, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. McAlpin was a tailor living in Philadelphia who made and repaired clothing for Lee and his “servant.”
- ¹⁶ Baumgarten, pp. 34–37.
- ¹⁷ Walsh, pp. 190–191.
- ¹⁸ Cornelia Lee to Elizabeth Collins Lee, December 24, 1803, Access # 5018, Folder E Collins, 1789–1804, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.
- ¹⁹ Portia Hodgson to Elizabeth Collins Lee, November 30, 1803, Portia and Cornelia Lee Letters, National Society of Colonial Dames of America Collection, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.
- ²⁰ Elizabeth Collins Lee to Zaccheus Collins, March 19, 1809, Daniel Parker Papers, 1809–1810, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

- ²¹ William Hodgson to Richard Bland Lee, April 1, 1804, William Hodgson Letterbook, Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- ²² Ann Lee Jones to Elizabeth Collins Lee, October 15, 1809, Accession 5018, Folder E. Collins, 1806–1866, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia. The first known document where he is referred to as “Old John” dates to 1801. Perhaps he was simply considered elderly by that time. The appellation may also have been added when his son by the same name was born to distinguish the two. Although the date of son John’s birth is not known, in 1817 he was considered a “young man,” probably between the ages of twelve and twenty, which suggests he was born between 1797 and 1805.
- ²³ Eleanor Stuart to Elizabeth Collins Lee, Undated, National Society of Colonial Dames of America Collection, Mss 1L5153a, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.
- ²⁴ Cornelia Lee Hopkins to Elizabeth Collins Lee, September 10, 1807, Accession #5018, Folder E. Collins, 1805–1866, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.
- ²⁵ Mary Collins to Elizabeth Collins Lee, undated (circa 1797–1799), Accession #3902, Box 28, Folder 1819–1874, Lee Family Manuscripts, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.
- ²⁶ Elizabeth Collins Lee to Zaccheus Collins, June 19, 1801, Richard Bland Lee Papers, 1794–1801, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.
- ²⁷ Richard Bland Lee advised his brother, Theodorick, against bringing a servant with him to New York: “...if you mean to travel in the stage the expense of the journey will at least be doubled...” Richard Bland Lee to Theodorick Lee, April 9, 1790, Richard Bland Lee Papers, 1779–1795, #438, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Mrs. Lee complained that she “felt alone” in the stage, “as Caroline slept all the way...” Elizabeth Collins Lee to Ann Matilda Washington, October 4, 1837, Society of the Lees of Virginia, Q1, The Lloyd House, Alexandria Library, Alexandria, Virginia. Among the correspondence and accounts relating to the purchase of the carriage a bearskin and a harness are detailed, but there is no mention of horses, suggesting that Lee sent them from Sully to Philadelphia with John.
- ²⁸ Elizabeth Collins Lee to Zaccheus Collins, September 28, 1801, Stephen Collins and Son Papers, #21816–21817, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- ²⁹ Entry November 9, 1801, Zaccheus Collins Account Book, Daniel Parker Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
- ³⁰ Zaccheus Collins to Richard Bland Lee, November 13, 1801, Letter Book of Zaccheus Collins 1801–1804, Daniel Parker Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
- ³¹ Richard Bland Lee to Zaccheus Collins, July 3, 1802, Daniel Parker Papers, 1795–1804, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

- ³² Zaccheus Collins to Richard Bland Lee, July 16, 1802, Letter Book of Zaccheus Collins, Daniel Parker Papers, 1801–1804, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
- ³³ Richard Bland Lee to Zaccheus Collins, December 18, 1806, Daniel Parker Papers, 1805–1807, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
- ³⁴ Elizabeth Collins Lee to Cornelia Lee, March 17, 1802, Clarissa Tilghman White Collection. There are other instances of slaves being taught to read and write. Though it was uncommon throughout the south, teaching African-Americans to read and write was not illegal in Virginia before 1819, when it was deemed “unlawful assembly.” Henning, *The Revised Code of the Laws of Virginia*, Volume I, 1819, p. 424.
- ³⁵ Ann Calvert Stuart to Elizabeth Collins Lee, November 1, 1807, Accession 5018, Folder E. Collins, 1805–1866, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.
- ³⁶ Eleanor Stuart to Elizabeth Collins Lee, April 17, 1801, National Society of Colonial Dames of America Collection, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.
- ³⁷ Wright, Donald R. *African Americans in the Early Republic, 1789–1831*, Harland Davidson, Inc., Wheeling, Illinois, 1993, p. 122.
- ³⁸ Wright, Donald R., p. 121–122. The author thanks Mary Thompson, Curatorial Registrar at Mount Vernon, for helping to clarify John’s opportunities for escape.
- ³⁹ This was especially true after Gabriel’s Rebellion (an uprising planned by slaves at Richmond in 1800). Walsh, pp. 216–217.
- ⁴⁰ Zaccheus Collins Account Book, April 23, 1804, Daniel Parker Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Receipt to John Hand, Jr., dated May 16, 1804, Daniel Parker Papers, 1795–1804, Box 6, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Richard Bland Lee to Zaccheus Collins, May 21, 1804, Daniel Parker Papers, 1795–1805, Box 13, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; *Alexandria Gazette*, June 20, 1815; *National Intelligencer*, April 17, 1820.
- ⁴¹ Richard Bland Lee, July 3, 1802, Daniel Parker Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
- ⁴² Elizabeth Collins Lee to Zaccheus Collins, February 7, 1802, Richard Bland Lee Papers, 1802–1856, Virginia Historical Society. Mrs. Lee often referred both to her immediate family and to her slaves as “the family”; she also frequently called the slaves her “people” or “servants.”
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Cornelia Lee to Elizabeth Collins Lee, October 18, 1804, National Society of Colonial Dames of America Collection, Portia and Cornelia Lee Letters, University of Virginia.

- ⁴⁵ Elizabeth Collins Lee to Ann Matilda Washington, October 6, 1832, Society of the Lees of Virginia Collection 264, Q21, Alexandria Library, The Lloyd House.
- ⁴⁶ Yellow fever, caused by a virus transmitted by mosquitos, was an infectious illness of short duration and variable severity. In most instances people recovered in just a few days. In more severe cases, damage to the liver and kidneys occurred, eventually leading to renal failure, coma, and death.
- ⁴⁷ Elizabeth Collins Lee in Alexandria to Zaccheus Collins, August 30, 1813, Richard Bland Lee Papers, Mss 1L5153a 8–63, Virginia Historical Society; Elizabeth Collins Lee to Zaccheus Collins, February 7, 1802, Richard Bland Lee Papers, 1802–1856, Virginia Historical Society.
- ⁴⁸ Elizabeth Collins Lee in Alexandria to Zaccheus Collins, August 30, 1813, Richard Bland Lee Papers, Mss 1L5153a 8–63, Virginia Historical Society.
- ⁴⁹ Bank of the United States, pp. 17, 23–24.
- ⁵⁰ Bank of the United States, pp.14–15.
- ⁵¹ Richard Bland Lee to Zaccheus Collins, March 10, 1802, Daniel Parker Papers, 1795–1804, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
- ⁵² Elizabeth Collins Lee to Zaccheus Collins, August 30, 1813, Richard Bland Lee Papers, Mss 1L5153a 8–63, Virginia Historical Society.
- ⁵³ Elizabeth Collins Lee to Ann Matilda Washington, September 25, 1832, Society of the Lees of Virginia Collection 264, Q 9, Alexandria Library, The Lloyd House.
- ⁵⁴ Bank of the United States, pp. 4–5.
- ⁵⁵ Elizabeth Collins Lee to Zaccheus Collins, August 26, 1821, Daniel Parker Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
- ⁵⁶ Bank of the United States, pp.13, 21, 25, 41.
- ⁵⁷ Elizabeth Collins Lee to Ann Collins Parker, Undated, Daniel Parker Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
- ⁵⁸ Ann Matilda Washington to Elizabeth Collins Lee, June 19, 1830, Daniel Parker Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
- ⁵⁹ Elizabeth Collins Lee to Ann Matilda Washington, January 12, 1831, Society of the Lees of Virginia Collection 264, Q1, Alexandria Library, The Lloyd House.
- ⁶⁰ Bank of the United States, pp. 24–25.
- ⁶¹ Will of Elizabeth Collins Lee, November 21, 1853, Washington, D.C., Wills & Inventories.
- ⁶² Bank of the United States, p. 17; Entry for Elizabeth Lee, United States Census, Washington City, Fourth Ward, District of Columbia, 1850, National Archives and Records Administration.

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Franklin, Caroline, and children, c. 1888. Please see page 116 for family genealogy. Photograph courtesy of Fairfax County Park Authority.

Ash Grove and the Sherman Family

by
Edith Moore Sprouse

The letters in this article were donated to the Fairfax County Park Authority by the Sherman family. Patricia Gallagher transcribed them.

Just behind the Sheraton Premier Hotel in Tysons Corner can be found the remnants of Ash Grove plantation, once the home of Thomas, the ninth Lord Fairfax. A new subdivision surrounds the house, which was reconstructed from architectural drawings after a fire destroyed much of the original dwelling on September 3, 1960. At that time its owner, Wells Alvord Sherman, Jr., was engaged in extensive restoration of the house and had removed four mantels, doors, woodwork and hardware. These materials were used in the rebuilding.

The first house on the property was a long double log house built by the Fairfax family in the 18th century and known as late as 1869 as the "White House." This was moved to another site when the main house was built about 1790 by Thomas Fairfax.¹ Ash Grove may have taken its name from the English estate of Ellen Ashe, wife of Thomas, the first Lord Fairfax, for there were no ash trees on the property. When Thomas moved to Vacluse, closer to Alexandria, he conveyed the farm to his son Henry in 1833.²

Henry was a West Point graduate. Although ill health prevented his from serving in the army, he raised a company of volunteers in Fairfax County when the Mexican War broke out. He told his friends that, "he was indebted to the United States for his education, and now when his services were needed, every principle of honor bound him to pay the debt." Captain Fairfax died at Saltillo on August 14, 1847. His fellow citizens met at the Fairfax Court House on September 20. After a lengthy eulogy, they declared a mourning period of thirty days and appointed a committee to arrange an appropriate ceremony when his body was brought back from Mexico. His fellow magistrates adjourned the September session of the county court as a token of respect.³ Henry was buried at Ash Grove. His grave was subsequently moved to the Falls Church, which structure he had taken a prominent part in restoring. His widow Caroline sold the 241-acre Ash Grove plantation to James Sherman in June 1851.⁴

Born in Oneida County, New York, James and his wife Fidelia Fairchild Sherman "continued to guard the old trees and repaired, propped up, and kept the old buildings standing long after their value and usefulness had departed."⁵ The farm flourished under his management. In 1853 he exhibited "four stalks of Oregon (Indian) corn 16' tall from root to tassel, and from root to ear 13', at the State Fair in Richmond."⁶ The agricultural census for Fairfax County in 1860 reported that Sherman had 8 horses, 5 cows, 7 cattle, and 8 hogs. In addition to his corn, he raised peas, beans, and potatoes, producing 500 pounds of butter that year, 150 pounds of honey, and 10 pounds of beeswax. During the Civil War, because of his Union sentiments, he was captured in November 1863 by Mosby's troops. A neighbor sent this letter to Capt. John S. Mosby:

Dr. William H. McVeigh to John S. Mosby on behalf of James Sherman, Jr.

November 18th 1863

Major Mosby

Dear Sir

Tho not personally acquainted with you, yet I feel that I can take the liberty of addressing you in behalf of my old neighbor James Sherman. I presume he does not deny being, in sentiment, a Unionist. But I am satisfied he has not been guilty of any disloyal act. On the contrary, he has rendered himself rather odious to his more ultra Union neighbors by his constant course as a citizen of Virginia. I learn, from an undoubted southern lady, whose father is a near neighbor of Mr. S., that he steadily refused to acknowledge allegiance to the bogus government of __ and that he was threatened with arrest for refusing to vote at an election held by the authority of that government. She further states, that he has on all occasions when in his power, rendered service to his Southern neighbors, when in trouble on account of their sentiments.

I know nothing of the circumstances that led to Mr. S. arrest, and can therefore express no opinion in regard to it, but would simply say, if consistent with duty, I feel that it would be but an act of justice as well as mercy to release the old man.

I am very respectfully
Yours &c Wm. H. McVeigh



Ash Grove, c. 1918. Photograph courtesy of Fairfax County Park Authority.

After the death of James Sherman in the spring of 1865, his youngest son Franklin managed the farm for his widowed mother. Born in Cayuga County, New York on February 11, 1843, he was educated in the north and in 1861 was studying law in New York City. In 1862 he returned to Fairfax County to help his parents on the farm. In late summer after the second battle of Bull Run, Franklin witnessed the destruction of the old Falls Church. "The church was surrounded by trees and I was on a hill some little distance away. I saw a stream of soldiers coming from the churchyard carrying bricks in their arms going to their camp. I suppose the whole church melted away that afternoon, the way I saw a barn melt at the same time-boards from one direction and bricks from another."⁷

By November 1863 he was in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he enlisted in the 10th Michigan Volunteers. At that time he was 5'9" in height, with blue eyes, a light complexion, and brown hair.⁸ Lieutenant Sherman was captured in Tennessee in 1864. While being transported, he managed to escape and reached Federal lines near the Ohio River. Returning to his regiment, Sherman requested a leave of absence.

Franklin Sherman's request for leave of absence from the 10th Michigan Cavalry following his escape from a Confederate prison

Louisville KY
Dec 19th 1864

I have the honor respectfully to request a "Leave of Absence" for the period of thirty days, if compatible with the interest of the Service, for the purpose of visiting my parents in Fairfax Co Va for the following reasons:

- 1st My parents are aged and in ill health.
- 2nd Since my absence from home, the county in which they reside has been repeatedly over-run and outraged by rebel guerillas and my father has suffered seriously both in person and property, and believe that my presence at home for a short time would be of great pecuniary advantage to him.
- 3rd For a period of more than a year, ending Oct 9 1864 I had not been absent from my command at any one time for a longer period than twenty four hours and the sum of those absences would not exceed three day. During that time I, with my Regt. was in continuous active service in Kentucky and East Tennessee. I have never before applied for a leave of absence.
- 4th On the tenth day of Oct 1864, while in command of a small scouting party I was captured by the rebels and endured the privations of a Rebel Prison for fifty days; at the expiration of which time Nov 25/64, in company with seven others, I made my escape and reached the Federal forces at Louisa, Ky after a walk of Two Hundred and Fifty miles through rebel country filled with troops and guerilla bands, occupying sixteen days and nights during which time the dangers we underwent were excessive. At the time of my escape there was not prospect of an exchange and I would probably have remained in confinement, doing no service to the United States for many months.

Having thus, probably, gained many months of service to the Government and saved the release of a rebel officer in exchange for me, I ask if the condition of the Service will admit a thirty days Leave of Absence.

I am with respect
B. Franklin Sherman
1st Lieut. Co "M"
10th Regt. Mich. Cav. Vols.

To Lieut. Basom
Ass't. Adj. Gen. Dept. of the Ohio
Louisville, Ky

He was discharged in November 1865 in Jackson, Michigan, and went home to Ash Grove. The following year Frank began describing conditions on the farm in letters to his brother, John Dempster Sherman.

*Franklin Sherman to John Dempster Sherman*¹

Ash Grove Va July 29, 1866

Dear John –

It has surely been a long time since I wrote to you and I have been oppressed with a feeling that I owed you a letter for weeks but somehow I have failed to find the time to write it. I will begin this tonight and finish it sometime before next Thursday when I am going to ride in to the city.

Things go very much after the old sort here. I have got the oats all under cover though some are spread under the north shed in the barnyard. We had almost continual and very heavy rain all through harvest and it was only by the hardest that we secured them at all. They are a little injured by the rains but not much or seriously. I am going to beat the bundles lightly with a flail so as to get the harvest grain for seed next Spring and run the rest through the cutting box for horsefeed and so make the straw harvest answer in lieu of hay. According to my calculations it will take a nice little pile of oats for seed next Spring – about sixty bushels; enough to sow all the ground in corn and potatoes this year. Jesse² began working the corn next (to) the woods yesterday and did about one-third of it going twice in a row with the double-shovel. The place had only been worked one way before harvest and part of it had got pretty grassy. It was planted quite late and is small yet but very even, of good color and growing rapidly. I am in hopes of making a right smart crop of it yet. Most of my corn looks full as well as could be expected. Over that poor ridge it looks quite fair – wherever the thinnest scattering of manure was put it is large. On parts where the land was so poor that hengrass died and white moss alone grew there is corn of very dark rich color and higher than my head.

I am a little disappointed in a part of the Orchard. The low part from the bars by the cowhouse down to the hollow. The corn is quite small and as little promising as any we have. Four years in corn is too much at one time besides it was planted in the middle of May and nearly every spear scratched up by the hens and it was replanted in the middle of June. I tell you I am a convert to the idea of early planting. Jimmy Frizzle planted his nearly five weeks before I did and the cold rains chilled it nearly to death and in three weeks after mine came up it was as large as his but his had been making root all the time. He planted

the corner field between his house and the lane fenced in the school-house lot and planted it with the rest.

I haven't done anything in the way of repairing fences or fixing up at all this summer. We have been so terribly crowded with work. Jesse will finish the corn in two more days and then I think we shall have time to fix things a little. One of the first things will be to hollow out the middle of the barnyard and fill up the lower corner with stones and clay then cover the whole yard deep with sawdust.

I intend, too, during the month of August to cut down all the persimmon and cherry trees in the lot by Jesse's house then we'll have them out of the way of the corn next year and offer less inducements to the bush-rangers and thieves and "trash" in general. It's ten o'clock and I think I'll stop for tonight. I got up at 1 yesterday morning to have a cool drive to town and didn't get my sleep out to pay for it last night.

Monday night We are having a pretty heavy shower tonight which I expect will be a fine thing for the turnip seed I sowed today. We had none at all scarcely of our own, but today I was at the sawmill and Oliver³ asked me if I had sowed any turnip seed yet? I told him no and that I had none scarcely. He told me he could let me have about half a pound if I wanted which of course I did. He would not charge anything for it. He said it cost him nothing and he had used all he wanted and was glad to let me have it if it was an accommodation. He is a good fellow I think. When the govt. farm he had charge of broke up he had about five pounds of seed on hand which he just kept for future use, and I must say I think he has made good use of part of it at least. I have sowed six or seven acres and I believe I shall buy seed enough to sow all the cornground. They will make an excellent crop to plow under on the poor ground for the oats next spring. They are said to derive nearly all their sustenance from the atmosphere and to be as enriching as clover.

I reckon I must tell you I came to be at the sawmill today. I was filling a big saltsack with dry sawdust in which to pack away a barrel of those green, furiously puckery pears. A week ago last Saturday I engaged a barrel of them to a huckster in Geo'town telling him plainly how very puckery and worthless they were, but when he came to see the pears and especially to try to bite one he declared that they were no such pears as he expected – that they were not fit for cooking nor any other purpose and never would be, and furthermore that hogs wouldn't eat such pears as they. Now that last statement I knew by actual experiment to be simple fact and was fully convinced of all the former. So he refused to take them at any price, as I also grieve to say did every huckster in the market. As for the huckster who first engaged them, I contented myself with assuring him that when I placed any

reliance whatever on his word again it would be some time hence. Well I got rather out of patience and obstinate about the pears. At first I was decidedly sick of them and was seriously considering the propriety of driving out of sight of those rascals and dumping them all out on the ground, but I didn't know what horrible pains and penalties I might thereby lay myself liable to since they've become so scarce on account of the cholera; so my doggedness coming in just here, I determined to haul them back home again and trust to further developments. I think I can soften and turn them yellow by packing them in dry sawdust, but mother says they will shrivel and rot instead. I am quite certain they won't though and am determined to get as much money out of those hucksters for those of them that keep and ripen as I expected to get for the barrel of green ones – viz. \$3.00.

Well I ought not to complain of that load. I took down a barrel of Strawberry Apples, got \$5.00. A barrel of cooking apples picked off the ground \$2.25, and less than three pecks of large pears \$1.75. \$2.80 worth of butter and \$1.35 of eggs – total \$13.15. If I could do that every Saturday I should think I was doing bully, but alas I haven't got more strawberry Apples to sell for \$5.00 a barrel. I have only sold \$7.43 worth of Str'by Apples this year; about 5 bushels which seems to me a pretty small allowance from the three trees, though they were not very full. I don't think the hens or thieves got more, if indeed as much, as their ordinary share for I went to the trees every morning and shook all the ripe fruit from them and secured it under the oats and corn, both being in the orchard lot. I've kinder hung round the orchard rather affectionately. I have sold \$15.00 worth of fruit this year. However, it hasn't been a hitting year for many of the fruit trees and those few haven't more than half hit. I have got a good many of these abominable pears and right smart of little quinces for which I hope to get a little greenback. It has rained so much tonight that Jesse can't work the corn tomorrow & we will go to work cleaning out the barnyard and fixing it up in style for next winter. I believe too that I shall take up the log floors in the stables. I am very sure that they injure and weaken the colts legs and joints – makes their ankles and hind legs swell and renders it almost impossible to cure a slight injury on their limbs. I think I can bank up around the colts [*sic*] stables so as to prevent the water from settling into it. At any rate I think those logs should come out. I am in hopes between now and cornharvest time to get time to haul the lumber to town. Mr. Lambkin took me to a Brother who says he will buy it and give me all he can afford for it, though it will not be any big price as the times are so dull that he couldn't tell when he should have occasion to use it. He is an honest old gentleman, I was sure from his appearance, and I shall haul the lumber to him just as fast as possible when I can get at it.

Mother⁴ and Virgie⁵ all send their love – so do I. I believe Mother has a paper of flower seeds she wants to send Lucy.⁶ I can't mail this before Thursday and maybe I'll add a PS before then. Enough for this time. Good night. Kiss Lucy and Frank⁷ for me.

Frank

¹ John Dempster Sherman (1829–1908) was Franklin's older brother. He lived in Peekskill, New York, where he was a teacher. His son, Frank Dempster Sherman, compiled an extensive family genealogy in which he says that his father became Superintendent of PS #8 in Peekskill and established the town's first bookstore.

² Jesse was the black man who lived and worked at Ash Grove for Franklin.

³ Oliver O. Besley owned the sawmill that was located a short distance from Ash Grove.

⁴ Fidelia Fairchild Sherman (1799–1875).

⁵ Virgie was Frank's thirteen-year-old niece. She was the daughter of his eldest sister, Fidelia Sherman Green, and James Walton Green.

⁶ Lucy McFarland, John's wife.

⁷ Frank Dempster Sherman, the eldest son of John and Lucy Sherman. He was born May 6, 1860.

Franklin Sherman to John Dempster Sherman

Ash Grove Va
Sunday Oct 21, 1866

Dear John –

Your last letter Carl brought up yesterday. I was glad to hear from you but was sorry that you should have taken so seriously what I said about coming down to collect. I only meant to indicate that from present appearances that it was or would be the only practicable way of raising money on the place this year, and if you needed a small sum about that time to carry you over the shoals and into deep water again that was the way in which it could be done, and to confess the truth it is a way that would not have been very distasteful to me in the then state of my feelings on the colt question, for it seems to me that we have more stock of the horse kind than is really desirable on the farm. It is a good deal of money value in a shape that not only gives no return, but being in such a number and running and racing all over the farm the chances of loss by their injuring themselves fully counterbalances the increase of value in growing them from coltship to horsehood.

For instance, last Spring after turning out to pasture, I noticed a ringbone started on the left fore ankle of the black colt. I applied a linament of certain and killed it – at least stopped its growth and took out the inflammation. He has been racing over the fields all summer, never sparing himself, and now I notice his ankle is swelled worse than ever. So with the cream colt. Early in the summer he seemed to have strained a tendon on the inside of his left hind ankle – just at that point it looks like a ringbone but doesn't extend half way round the leg. It camed him for a while but afterwards he got over it and next succeeded in jamming his left should and is yet lame from it, though I have no fears but that I can cure it when I begin to stable them and have them under my hand. But he doesn't hesitate to take a run whenever challenged, though he favors his shoulder a good deal after the race is over.

If they were old enough and heavy enough to put to steady work, we could take care of them and see that they didn't injure themselves. But they are not, and being fat and feeling like fighting cocks they race and jam themselves about, very much to our pecuniary disadvantage if they continue to hurt themselves. The iron-gray mare — she was brown when you went away, is by far the largest of the set – thick set and heavy built – and keeps herself in first rate order. She is quiet and peaceable and is not for sale. It would take a very good offer of money in hand to get her. However, there is probably little danger of such a contingency.

The white colt is round as an apple and is full of the old Nick as an egg is of meat. There is barely a fence on the farm that can turn him – and that little lousy scrub that you used to keep on the barn floor is his full equal. I firmly believe that the devil has taken bodily possession of those two colts. They are fast friends, having entirely discarded the society of the others and go running over the place seeking whatever they may devour. The little mare will jump any fence the white one can. She is almost as large as the white colt & is in fine condition. She will make a very handsome and valuable horse I think. So too will the little iron-gray horse, colt of Nancy's this Spring. He is doing finely and is set out for a big fellow. There have been a few affectionate inquiries about the colts, but people want to buy something that will do to go to work at once, so I fear I shan't be able to sell any of them soon.

As soon as I get the corn collected and start Jesse with the plough, I shall go to laying over and repairing fences and see if I can't make some that will turn the colts. I don't know but I shall have to enclose some field with a fifteen rail fence to do it with. The work horses look quite well. Billy and Nancy are in better order than ever since I have

been home before. Kitty is thinner because of her own deviltry. She never rests for a week but that she must needs "put on airs" when she is hitched up again. In drawing in corn & doing some other hauling, I have got her pretty well broken in again since her rest while we were gathering cornfodder, and I intend to keep her steadily in the harness from now until Christmas, either ploughing or teaming. It will probably make her poor and keep her so, but she might as well be poor by steady work as by "raising Ned" and worrying herself to death.

I have got the potatoes dug and in the cellar. There were about the same quantity of large ones as last year, but only one barrel of small ones. A few were affected with rot.

I and Jesse spent half a day fixing the corn crib. I was afraid of a disaster like yours last fall. The beam or, rather, pole over the eastern end of the north manger had cracked by a knot and sagged three or four inches in the middle so as to waste corn into the manger. We also put in a post under the middle of the crossbeam that those beams lie on. You put a chestnut post there temporarily and had a cedar post squared off at the end, apparently for that place. We put that in and drove it up very solidly. It restored the beam to a horizontal and everything seems solid enough now to bear the crib packed full of shelled corn, if we had so much. I'm not good at any such kind of work, though. I can't do it nicely and it always takes me twice as long as it needs.

I have the corn from over half of the ten acres in the big meadow picked and drawn into the barn. The men will shuck that tomorrow while I am gone. It threatens rain & they can work indoors. I am afraid that what I have in the barn would heat if I waited to gather the whole before husking. It is the greenest corn of the whole crop, and I should not have harvested it first but I want to turn the stock into that field as soon as possible. They will get a great deal of rich feed before it is plowed. I had my old corn shelled out the last wet days. Had four barrels full. Corn meal is retailing in town at \$1.60 per barrel. James engaged 10 bushels to Orme for \$1.40, and I shall try tomorrow to engage 8 or 10 bushels at the same price.

We are having most beautiful weather – like early summer – bright, warm clear day. It is so warm that I can't kill a hog that I've wanted to since the first of the month. We have been entirely out of meat for a month, and of lard for nearly the same time, and out of money for the same time, so we did without from necessity. I have a hog ready to kill that I think will weigh 250 lbs. He is a big fellow I tell you what.

Old corn has advanced fast in price lately and I hear that new corn was \$4.00 a bbl. in market yesterday. If that is so, corn will be high this winter and I shall have enough to spare to take past Jesse's payday and buy clover seed for the outground next spring. 30 acres = 6 bu. = 40 or 45 dollars. A nice little item but I know it will be money well

invested at least. That neglected, it would entail a loss many times that amount. I got a quart package of seed wheat from the Dept. of Agriculture and sowed it on the SW plot of the garden. From that I will start my wheat family. I will have enough to sow a field by the time I have a field I would trust wheat on, and I think it a good deal better than to pay \$8.00 a bu. for it. We are all well and send lots of love to everybody. Franky¹ went over to Mr. Swink's today with Freddie and Willie and Ned Hunter. He wrote to you today, and Carl sends it in a letter to Lucy. It is 11 pm & I am almost asleep. Got to get up & start at "crack o'day". Good night.

Frank

¹ "Franky" was Frank Dempster Sherman, John's son.

Franklin Sherman to John Dempster Sherman

Washington DC
October 31st 1866

Dear John

You see I send along the paper you made out and which Lieut. Cuyler ornamented with the various lines and marks across from one side to another. I'm in a great hurry. Am writing at Mr. Lambkin's office. I had to go to Alexandria on business for Harve¹ and wanted to see a Mr. Chapman about our claims,² so I came up and staid overnight and had the evening to talk with him in.

You want to sign your name to the statement at the foot of the paper and make an Affidavit to its truth on the inside of the sheet. Then on another paper write a statement of all of the facts in connection with the damage – the fortifications for which the timber was taken – the general conduct of the officer in charge – the statement of the corporal that it was contrary to orders to have any fires outside the line of picket for which reason you could procure written acknowledgement as to the fires being built by our troops, etc., etc. Anything that would throw any light on the matter.

Mr. Chapman boards with Eliza Bull and is a great friend of theirs and Carl's; mine too for that matter. Also of Sec. Stanton's son, and is Acting Assistant Sec. of war and thinks that from his position he could secure for the claims a speedy and favorable consideration, especially since he is a personal friend of one of the prominent members of the board to which such claims are referred. There is a little hurry in the matter for Stanton will likely go out in a little while and they would not stand as good a chance then perhaps.

I have found one of the bills or accounts that father made out for the property taken by Smith's foraging party with Green's and Gibson's³ certificate. I am going to get James'⁴ Affidavit to his statement and also to Gibson's signing the certificate and his being dead; and I'll write out a history of that affair like yours of the wood and also a statement of the services by the family rendered during the War, to accompany both claims.

Do it as soon as possible for even if there is no change made in the War Dept. yet it will be acted on in the order in which it is received with others, the rule being "first come first served". I'm hot on the trail of greenbacks. I've bargained with a fellow to let him have 20 acres of timber for \$45 an acre, to pay \$300 by New Years & all by next Aug. & to have all taken off by that time except trees reserved for Ship timber for which he has till Oct 1st 1867. I think I've got it fixed so that he can take no advantage & he appears like an honest fellow. If things go right I can make you a good payment next Christmas.

No more now

Frank

Give your statement the market value of rails, etc. at that time which was more than twice the value claimed in the account and that the usual rate of selling stand timber is for one half it's market value. And all such.

Frank

Say too in the statement that the trees were being cut for stockade purposes and those were chosen as would furnish a clear trunk from 16 to 20 feet in length. That will give you a better idea of the value of the timber taken.

F

¹ Harve was James Harvey Sherman (1825–1896). He was the eldest Sherman brother.

² The Shermans were seeking payment for timber taken from their land by Union soldiers.

³ Probably one of the two Gibsons, either Jesse or Joshua, who witnessed James Sherman's will in 1864.

⁴ James Green, brother-in-law of the Shermans.

Franklin Sherman to John Dempster Sherman

Ash Grove Fairfax Co Va
Monday Night Feb 28 1867

Dear John

Last Saturday when I was in town Carl^l told me that she had a letter from you, but on looking for it it was non. I was sorry she couldn't find it but was glad that you had written. I think I'll "answer" it now though I don't know its contents. We are all flourishing very much in the usual fashion. I've been tinkering about considerably & have succeeded in doing pretty near nothing. The roads are frightful & teaming is entirely impossible while the ground is too wet to plow, so the main Spring work is about at a standstill. Through a great deal of tribulation, I have made a "doubletree" & half a dozen "single trees". Two of the last I made very short for working corn with. I had one set of whiffletrees ironed with the irons from the set you got upon the camp after the 5th Michigan Cavalry left. That evener & one whiffletree proved to be weak & they were too long to work on our wagon, so I made a new set. Come to think of it, I can hardly tell what I have spent my time at this winter and yet it has kept me pretty busy all the time.

Chopping wood & cutting feed take a great deal of time & a very little timbering in addition takes all the rest. I haven't even got up a wood pile for summer yet, but have got to draw some tomorrow.

I have lately spent some considerable time in fixing up and learning to drive a four horse team. Through many discouragements & prophecies of failure, I at last got all things ready & with infinite complacency hitched up. By George you never saw such awkward performances in your life. I had Nancy & Stonewall in the lead with Billy & Kitty on the tongue. Everyone of them had worked on the wagon & plow, yet neither of them knew what was wanted of them. Billy, conceiving himself insulted by having Stonewall hitched ahead, sprang for him with the evident intention of eating him up, while Nancy – being opposed to everything generally – indulged in a few promiscuous kicks at Billy and Kitty & finished by trying to browse all the mane off Stonewall's neck. When the hind horses started those ahead, instead of moving out the way, would stop stock still till the others ran onto them. Then, if they started to pull, those behind were discouraged & hung back all they could. I got a little go out of them, but half an hours experiment resulted in twisting off my wagon tongue which put a stop to the practice that afternoon. Next day I took a little different course with them. Being without a wagon, I fastened the breastchains of the hind horses to the evener in front & drove about for a spell till

they learned to start all together & to move together a little better. After two or three times, I put them on the wagon again & they went a great deal better.

Today the teamster I have engaged & who begins work the first of March, having nothing on hand, came up to try them. This time we took them regular fashion, saddle on the nigh wheel hoss & drive with one line – jerk to gee & pull to haw. Stonewall was “under the line”. It was mighty awkward at first, but he learned fast & we soon put Nancy under the saddle, Billy on the other side & Kitty in front on the right side, which is the arrangement I always intended after I got them broke. The two largest behind & Nancy, the biggest & slowest, under the saddle. Kitty was disposed to put on some “airs” when put ahead, but concluded it hardly best to try. She tried that when I first hitched them up, but luckily it was when the rest were going good & I urged them all the harder. She settled back into the breeching two or three times, but the other three dragged her along as though she was no more than a cat. The last time they drew the wagon almost onto her – the front end of the box did rub onto her hips pretty heavily but it took all the conceit out of her. She sprang into the collar and has never tried that game since, although work is evidently no-wise to her taste.

This P.M. I cut one of the cedars in the big meadow & took 13 ft. of the butt to the mill & had two sticks 3x6 inches sawed out for sills for my wood rack. It was a light log, but the ground was so soft it gave them a good taste of pulling in concert. While the sills were sawing we took on as much wet sawdust as the wagon would hold & came down. Then I put in some other pieces for the rack & took them up to James² with the sills & coming back put on 218 ft. of green oak that I had at the mill so we made a fair afternoons work & gave the colts a good lesson in teaming. Tomorrow I shall take up the boards for the bottom & sides of the rack & get some bolts made for it & get my barrow from the blacksmith shop. My old one gave entirely out last fall & I had new woodwork made this winter & the teeth sharpened. I have the tack made to hold a corn & a tight-box to hold 40 bushels. I don’t expect, however, to draw more than 3/4 of a cord of wood down & 25 bushels of lime or oystershells back; not this year at least. When the colts get full size & used to it, I can put on more if I chose, but this is a long ways from town & over lots of bad road & I think such a load three times a week will be enough at first.

I will have a good deal of work here on the farm with which I can amuse them the rest of the time. Indeed, at first all the team work on the farm will have to be done the odd days for we only have harness enough for the four. I think, though, in a little while I can make the team earn enough to buy a pair of lead harness at some of the second

hand stores. I have heard that they can be got for 2 or 5 dollars. For the first week or two, I shall only take \$2 a cord. I figure the profits like this: 3/4 cord of wood at \$7 per cord, it is now \$9, is \$5.25 – say \$5. On the other side is teamsters wages \$10 per month. Say makes but 10 trips a mo. – each load is \$1. Lime is now 5 1/2 cents but at 6c twenty five barrels would be \$1.50. Chopping is 60 to 75 cts. a cord, but at 80 each load will cost .60. Toll at Langley as I commute would be .15 cts. Wheelwright, blacksmith & harness makers levies each trip 75 cts., making in all \$4.00, leaving me \$1.00 for the wood, & at 1-10 trips a month would be \$120 a year, so I shouldn't expect to make my everlasting fortune by hauling wood. The lime I call worth 20 cts. a bushel as soon as its on the place. I wouldn't sell it for that. That is \$5 worth which will pay for the use of the team & driver & they will do enough on the farm on odd days to pay for their keeping, so I can see a great advantage, though not much money profits in starting a team especially as I have the horses, and work or no work, they will eat. It will at least pay its way & maybe help a little & every little counts. I think, too, the colts would sell quicker & better to break them & put them on the road looking well where folks will see them. There is one other point, too, I hope to save something on my calculation. I can often get a load of oyster shells instead of lime. They cost nothing, are a little lighter than lime & when burned & stacked make a full bushel of lime for one of shells. Besides I shall have a good deal of hauling that will bring a great deal more money than wood. I have over 5000 feet of seasoned oak lumber that I surely can sell at some price this Spring or Summer, & at a very low price a load will be twice or three times as much as a load of wood. Then, too, there are 75 or 100 cedar trees that could be spared from the place with decided advantage & with no injury to its looks. That clump is in the big meadow opposite the front of the woods, is not in a conspicuous place to attract attention by their beauty & some of them are stunted an miserable looking. The corn among them was about nix last year in the oats will be nixer this year if they are left. And there are some runts in the cedar lot & others that have the central stalk of the top broken off & are growing into homely shapes. I think the rest would look at the better to have them cut out. If I can't sell the lumber, I shall have to sell some cedars with what corn I can spare to buy clover seed with. 6 bushels at \$10 a bushel is a very interesting item for a poor coot like me who for a year hasn't carried \$10 of his own at one time. Last month I sold nearly \$50 worth of stuff & this month nearly \$60.

The expenses have been pretty heavy & I pay the help at then end of the month so no other debt is accumulating. At New Years I owed for taxes of '66, to James for work & half a quarter of beef, & to Jesse

for last years work. In all a little over \$70. The taxes was the smallest bill & most urgent, so I paid it first. James' was next in size & I paid him next & I have paid Jesse over \$20, making \$52 I have made over expenses since Jan. 1st. If I hadn't owed it all & more I should feel quite rich. I do now, that I only owe one man & he only \$15. Jesse is in no hurry for the money & would rather I'd keep it for him, but I want to pay him & be done with him – he stole too much even for a darky. I paid him over \$10 today & could more as I had \$12 left, but my wood rack will cost something & the harrow & James has about finished putting new spokes & rims in the hubs of the front ambulance wheels which will be a \$3 job, & I am firmly rooted & grounded in the determination to trust no one & to pay on the spot. It comes awkward sometimes, but from my little experience of it I'm satisfied it is best for a farmer in this country. It was because he called me good pay that Besley³ rolled my log over 20 others on the log-way & sawed it in half an hour after I took it there, & stopped sawing to rip a plank into slats for standards & threw that in the Bill on the ground of mutual accommodation.

The teamster I have engaged is the darkey that took care of Armstrong's horses when he was here sick & if you remember they always shone like seals. He has been working for Tyson.⁴ I knew nothing of his teaming, but I knew he could take care of horses for Tyson's are in splendid fix. I saw, too, today by the way he handled himself & the horses that he understands the business. Now if he don't get tight or into other scraps when he goes to town, I shall be mighty well pleased with him. I have never heard of his doing so, but most of them do as a matter of course. Well, good night for this time. Maybe I'll gas some more before I mail this. Its a lucky thing Carl has some franked envelopes.

Wednesday night. You remember the oak tree farthest east on the edge of the lawn had begun to die. Well, last year not more than half the limbs leafed out, so in hopes of saving it about three weeks ago I climbed up and sawed off all the top – that is all the big limbs. There were four of them, the largest nearly five feet through. I tell you it was rather scarey business. The tree is so large I couldn't reach half way round it any where below the forks & the few limbs below were either dead or very small sprouts. It was tremendous when one of these big limbs went down. They would crack like pistols & make the tree shake like a leaf. When one began to crack I would stop sawing & crawl down into the crotch as far as I could & cling with both arms as hard as I could to another, out of sheer cowardice. The last & biggest one I sawed till it gave one crack & as it had a small branch through the crotch when it went down, I concluded to skedaddle, especially as an

East wind raising so I put in a little wedge to prevent its falling to the East & came down. It followed about 9 o'clock that night. It makes quite a difference in the looks, but I am in hopes the trunk will sprout & take new lease of life. The tree at this end of the seat was nearly dead when a high wind twisted off all its large limbs and it sprouted & is now very thrifty. It was the first oak in the grove to put out leaves last Spring. The limbs came down without doing any great damage. Trimmed some of the young trees pretty close & took off an armful of limbs from one of the holly trees, but they did less damage than I feared. I had no idea the trees were so old. I supposed that those three oaks were set out there, but I reckon not, for I counted the rings on one of the limbs & that not the largest. That limb was 110 years old! But the crotch was 40 feet from the ground & I suppose the three must be 250 or 200 years old. Well I believe I've spouted enough for one time. I'll have to stop or have nothing to say next time.

Frank

¹ Franklin's sister, Caroline, worked for the Federal Government.

² James Green was a wheelwright whose shop was located at the corner of Lewinsville Road and the Leesburg & Alexandria Turnpike (Route 7). He was Franklin's brother-in-law, having married Fidelia Sherman in 1846.

³ Besley's steam sawmill was located west of Ash Grove and north of the Leesburg & Alexandria Turnpike, close to James Green's wheelwright shop.

⁴ William Tyson.

Franklin Sherman to John Dempster Sherman

Ash Grove Fairfax Co Va
Sunday night April 27, 1867

Dear John

Your letter & the agreement were received all right. I am glad you have had a chance to rent a corner of your room at so good a rate. It will help rather than interfere with your business & I should think anything that would help fill that room would be a desirable acquisition. It seems too bad that James McF.¹ should be so afflicted. Is he considered incurable? It is awful if it is so. Carl wanted me to tell you that she would not be able to send you \$15 the first of next month, the dictionary taking her spare money.

About two weeks ago I blundered on a good streak of luck & have contracted to furnish the Wash. Alex & Geo'town RR with a carload

of ties a week, delivered on the car at Falls Church. I get 50 cts. each for oak & maple & 40 cts. for chestnut. I take half a day with two horses to draw them out to the turnpike & then with my 4 hoss team I load a car in two days, making three trips the first & two by 2 PM on the second when the train comes along. A car load comes to from \$50 to \$65 & takes less than three days hauling.

My business expenses now are about double the amount of sales last year, aside from the living in the house, but out of \$60 a week I am bound to make a good deal. I got pay for the first load. A week ago yesterday I got pay for the first load of 120; \$57.20. The Superintendent took my word that the ties were loaded & the number correct. They hadn't been taken away from Falls Church & I had nothing to show that they were there, but he told me my face was good for more than 120 ties. They had no car up for me last week, so I left the ties on the platform. I went to see about it yesterday, but my man had gone to Balt. and wouldn't be back til 5 1/2, which would make us too late. I shall see him tomorrow & I presume he'll pay me for them & let me load them afterwards. If he does I shall then have money enough to buy clover seed though it is \$13.50 per bushel & I want 6 bushels. \$81 is a pretty round sum to pay for grass seed in one spring I think. I intend though to wait. It has already fallen 50 cts. & I think it will be down to \$10 before I am ready to sow.

Last year I sowed very late & it took very well indeed & I am inclined to repeat the experiment this Spring. If it all works right & I think it will, for they told me yesterday that they wanted the ties, I intend to send you next weeks wages – \$57 at least, the interest of 1866. It may come might handy in making up the money you want to the 1st of May. After that I'll begin to save for haying & harvesting & for a trip North which I propose to take early next Fall. I pay my hewer \$22.00 a day, my teamster \$4 per month & board; a well-grown boy \$4 & board; girl the same. Other expenses are pretty heavy & all together count up to about \$100 per month, but I'll make a great deal more than I made last year & then it seems so much more like business.

I really think I'm getting to be quite a farmer when I see my 4 hoss team hitched up to my big 4 horse wagon. I have a wood rack that holds a heaping cord with a tight-box at the bottom holding 85 bushels, which I fixed for teaming to town with wood & hauling back lime, but this tie business has altered my plan & I'm afraid those great heavy ties will tear my rack to pieces. It is very light and pretty & strong enough to carry any quantity of cordwood, but those green ties weigh 200 lbs. apiece & when one crowds or jams it is ten times worse than light sticks of cordwood. After I get the corn planted, I shall try &

arrange to have a carload of lime run from Wash. to Falls Church & to load 2 cars with ties a week.

That would keep my team busy & I could make a load both ways. I have Stonewall & Nellie for the leaders & Billy & Nancy for wheelers. Nancy is saddle horse & drive with one line. I tell you what, it is a small but mightily stylish team & the darkey thinks he can draw any load that any 4 horses in the country can, though of course I don't have them loaded too heavily. While plowing & harrowing we put in little Mac who went just like an old horse – gave the least trouble of any colt I ever saw. No trouble at all. But as I can hardly keep the rest worked enough to take the Sancho out of them, I have never had him on the wagon yet. Stonewall & Nellie both work alone on shovel-plows first rate. Stonewall is especially very tractable. His slight ring bone don't injure him in the least. He & Nellie make a splendid pair of dark greys, but Nellie is too full of iniquity to take to town on a light wagon, especially when I have to leave them for some time alone. I am going to buy another pair of harnesses. Broad strap wheel harnesses, I think, being much easier to hold back in. Besides I have but 2 pair & when the big team is in use, all other horsework must stop, while if I had more harness I could have a colt to work corn & taters this summer while the others could be earning some stamps. Besides have six horses & colts old enough to work & I think it not unlikely I may keep & work them all. Drive a 6 horse team – have to pay my teamster anyway & the more teams I have the more he'll earn with them.

I don't know as I've told you that I sold Kitty three or four weeks ago. I sold her to my teamster for \$75. She acted so badly she was likely to (*unreadable*) all the other colts & I sold her for enough to pay for the haying wagon & finish paying old Jesse. She cut her leg in foaling last fall & it never got well & it was doubtful if it would. He knew just she was & I let her go & have been gladder & gladder ever since.

I began sowing oats the fifth. Finished the 10th. They are all up & growing nicely. I sowed all the corn ground; 30 acres. The garden is plowed & half planted. I threw the four plots west of the quince trees into one like that east & plowed them much larger shaving half the wide border outside the garden & plowing outside the currant bush between the quinces, making the middle walk the same width the whole length, as you did between the first four beds & the other wide walk the same. The corn ground was all plowed, but one days work last fall, & yesterday I had the boys begin drawing out the manure. That will keep me busy all the time I have for 2 weeks, after which I can plow, harrow, layoff & be ready to plant (in) three days. I only plant about

for 10 acres this year. I can cover it all with manure & get a good crop I think.

I tried to roll with the rotten old roller with Stonewall & Nelly but the roller broke & they ran & like to put my (*unreadable*) out. James will have the new frame work done tomorrow. I have 30 or 40 acres of land to roll before the oats or grass can be cut & will put the boy & one team at it, while I & the man draw manure with the other. So you see I've a good many irons in & lots to do, but I think I can do it in good time. I beat all my neighbors in oats & I want to be at least even in corn. Appearances are favorable for fruit so far this Spring. It is 10 1/4 PM and we want to get into town at 8 1/2 AM, so I should be in bed. Goodnight.

Frank

¹ John D. Sherman was married to Lucy McFarland, and this is probably a reference to a member of her family.

On September 13, 1867, Franklin Sherman was married to Caroline Matilda Clapp Alvord at St. James Church, in Greenfield, Massachusetts. The first of their ten children, Wells Alvord Sherman, was born on July 19, 1868.⁹ Caroline's brother Henry quickly sent a congratulatory letter.

Henry E. Alvord to Franklin Sherman. Written on the occasion of the birth of Wells Alvord Sherman, born July 19, 1868.

Fort Gibson CN¹
July 29, 1868

Dear Frank

Your letter dated the 19th and mailed 20th, with the good news from Carrie² has been received. The mail starts on its return immediately and I have but a few moments for a note.

I heartily rejoice with you at Carrie's welfare, and the birth of a boy to you.

Would to God the same blessing might be mine!³

As you have been ahead of me in having a son, so too have you been in naming him. The name you have given would have been my choice beyond any doubt.⁴

Before I started on my recent long ride,⁵ I prepared a present for my (then prospective) nephew – a fine large beaver skin roughly dressed without backing.

It was sent in a box to Greenfield⁶ with a similar skin for Master Clarence.⁷ It was marked “for Carrie & child” but the mark was not noticed on its arrival at Gfd and I believe Mother put it away with the other one. It will be little work for a good furrier to finish dressing it; that done and it being lined, it will make a fine carriage robe or a mat for Wells to roll upon next winter.

Thanks to you for your note. Much love to Carrie and a kiss to my nephew.

Yours Truly
Henry E. Alvord

¹ Fort Gibson, Cherokee Nation (Oklahoma). Captain Alvord had taken command of Company M, 10th U.S. Cavalry in August, 1867. He later transferred to command of Company M, 9th U.S. Cavalry in 1870, and resigned his commission in 1871. (Source: Leckie, William. *The Buffalo Soldiers*. 1971, and Gailey, C.K., Conversation of February 9, 1998.)

² ‘Carrie’ was Henry’s nickname for his sister.

³ Henry married Martha Swink, daughter of the owner of ‘Spring Hill,’ which was a plantation near Ash Grove.

⁴ Wells Alvord was named for Henry’s father.

⁵ He may have been referring to a scouting expedition into the Wichita Mountains which began in May, 1868. He did not return to Fort Gibson until July. (Source: Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers*, pp. 30–31.)

⁶ Greenfield, Massachusetts, was his parents’ home.

⁷ Master Clarence was Henry’s half-brother, also born in 1868.

In 1869, General Stoneman, under whom he had served during the war, appointed Sherman as sheriff of Fairfax County under the military government. Despite the fears of his friends, he entered his new office with “all the cheerful confidence of ignorance and youth” and found the defeated populace to be “as peaceable, well disposed, and law abiding a people as live in the United States.”¹⁰ Many years later he described events of that period in a letter to his nephew Frank.

Updated letter from Franklin Sherman to his nephew, Frank Dempster Sherman

Dear Frank Dempster,

I don’t know how much or what there is to say about my being military sheriff in the Reconstruction time. From the time the legisla-

tion in Congress began the processes & effects were discussed all through the South & of course here in Fairfax. Nearly all the local offices were held by the same men who had held them at the breaking out of the Civil War—or by friends of the same kind & same ideas. Most of the talk turned toward the Shrievalty¹ as being most difficult, most responsible & possibly, the most dangerous of all the County offices. The Sheriff was not only the officer of the County serving papers, collecting all local taxes, paying to the State its share & holding the remainder subject to the orders of the County Court. A “stay-law”, preventing the summary collection of ante-war debts, proclaimed by the military command of the District immediately after the war (a merciful and wise law) had been joyfully seized on & extended by the so-called “Rump” legislature & was already so much of a potential issue that no one in the Legislature dared try to have it repealed.

It was said by some of the older & wiser ones that if the law were ever repealed it would be by the same kind of authority that first proclaimed it & reckon it was the one good thing they hoped for in the threatened re-construction. A bitter & ugly feeling was developing between the Creditor & Bankrupt debtor classes and the then Sheriff was thankfully content that the Stay-law saved him from much unpleasant & perhaps dangerous work. The Sheriff was a man of forty or thereabouts, had been a Captain in the Black Horse Cavalry, seen much service & won his Captaincy by successive promotions. And he may have fostered the idea that was prevalent that this was a turbulent county & held quiet though in daily danger of an explosion. Of the Sheriff’s Office it was confidently asserted that no Yankee in the county would dare take it. If any dared [*unreadable*] from the duties. If any could do these none could give the necessary Bond. The Shrievalty was the one office on which they staked the assertion that it could only be filled by a Commissioned Officer of the Army backed by a squad of cavalry.

Of course such assertions were in the nature of a challenge to the Union people & not likely to go untried. I was asked if I would take the office if offered, & without half the doubt & hesitancy I would feel now, said yes.

There was a meeting of the Union people at Vienna & I was recommended to Gen. [George F.] Stoneman, Comd’g at Richmond for Sheriff of Fairfax County. I, with my Regiment, had served under Gen. Stoneman in the Spring & Summer of 1865 when he won great credit & conceived a high opinion of our Regiment. I think the bald fact that I was a Capt. of the 10th Mch. [Cavalry] was stated in the letter from the Sec. of the meeting. I do not know whether it was called to Gen. Stoneman’s attention or if it had anything except in a general way to do with my appointment, which came sometime in March, 1869. I

qualified at April Court, furnishing the Bond by a mighty narrow margin, as a unionist member of the Court was hired to prevent it by promise of support for the legislature later. After court that day I went to the Clerk's office & received subpoenas, executions, notices, summonses, etc, etc, etc to make hundreds of miles of riding & taking me into nearly every neighborhood of the county in the next three weeks. And thenceforth there was not let-up. It was a strenuous life & no mistake. Many kind friends were so filled with fears & forebodings that they over-flowed into my ears but fortunately didn't reach your Aunt Carol's.² Some wouldn't take my [unreadable]. Some would have me shot within a week. Others, more liberal, gave me a month. I had taken chances before & had no idea of being bluffed now so I rode gaily off day by day & if, as was often the case, I rode almost as much by night, no one knew the road I would take or the one by which I would come. I would follow the troopers rule (except when he was hampered by orders) never to ride over the same road at the same time in two days in succession.

I made friends right & left, as fast as I could ride to them. Every official & professional man at the Court House was friendly & helpful & others over the County took the cue from them I suppose. I went ignorantly & confidently (confidingly I might say) on my way. If I was ever in special danger I didn't know it & all came out well. I was told afterward I was in danger. Once, of being shot in open court by a reckless youngster not out of his teens & ugly drunk. He is now a prosperous & wealthy businessman in Ky. Another time I went into a barroom, after Court, filled with a half drunk crowd talking noisily, to find some one I didn't know personally to serve a court paper on him. I noticed almost a dead silence fell when I came in. I went straight to the bar & asked the keeper—an old friend—for the man I wished to see. The silence grew absolutely dead. He told me—& his bated breath and voice got a little on my nerve though til then I had thought of nothing special—only to get as many notices served that day at Court as possible & save days of hard riding afterwards. I turned to the man I was after & gave him the paper with some joke that I hoped it meant less trouble to him than to the other fellow. He took it & asked me to take a drink with him! [unreadable] without mortal [unreadable]. I was told that the crowd in the barroom was against Yankees (of course) and Reconstruction (of course) & because I was the only Yankee appointee who had not gotten a Southern ex-official as a Deputy to do the work, all the talk was concentrating on me & dire threats were making, if so & so. Both these cases were early in the game & I didn't know the danger in them til long enough afterward so they didn't scare me for anything that might come.

That fall the Stay-law was allowed to expire & executions came into my hands by the score & hundred, but like most impending terrors the reality was not so bad as the anticipation. Mighty little injustice or hardship was worked with me as the tool. But also not a complaint was made that a debt was lost by any neglect or failure of mine.

My good luck in the start was largely due to the fact that I was my father's son. In the ten years of his residence here before the war he was truly "highly respected" & "greatly liked". He came into the county armed with three letters of credit—the best a man could bring at that time. He was a Democrat, a Methodist & a Free Mason. Every man of any account or standing at the Court House was his friend & I think in spite of all the hot feeling was willing to be one to me—and a few weeks acquaintance made them all friends, at least they seemed to me.

Early in 1870, the Reconstruction of the State was completed, the military had turned over all authority to the State officials & the legislature had vacated [*unreadable*] offices, to be filled by appointees of the County Judges till the next regular election in the fall. Soon, in private conversation, nearly every lawyer & official at the Court House said he hoped I would "keep the office", "not be disturbed", "be reappointed by Judge Cockerille", etc. To all I disclaimed my wish to continue. "I've filled the job I was appointed for & don't like it enough to make any effort for it." Similar talk was made through the county. Then two lawyers of the largest practice offered, individually, to use his influence with the Judge to appoint me if I would agree to accept but I had had a good chance to compare the honors, labors & emoluments & I didn't care to keep on.

Before the new court opened the first morning, the Judge sent for me—had expected to have my application "for continuance in the Sheriff's office—had no wish to make a change but had understood from others that I didn't wish to continue & would not apply for it". I told him yes, that I hope he was ready to appoint a successor & let me out. He said "so I understand & I am prepared to make an appointment but the man to whom I promised it understands that the promise was only to be good in case you persisted in refusing". "I have no wish to make a change", was his last as we started for the Court House. A very good young fellow was appointed who had quite a political career afterward—somewhat chequered one.

One of my unpleasant jobs was to collect quite a large sum—all I could though but a small part of what was due—from my predecessor in the Office of moneys due the State & County on various accounts running from the war till I came in. There was a general going over of accounts & a good [*unreadable*]. There was a general settling up & ascertaining of alliances & official housecleaning generally in that year

of Reconstruction, all of which I was gladly out of & there was a general feeling among business men that the change was needed. In the face of all which he sought & got the Democratic nomination for Sheriff in that fall of "vindication".

The matter shaped itself in such a way that a re-election of my successor was certain to bear the appearance of a verdict by the people of the County against my performance of the duties as contrasted with his. When that became too plain to be ignored I took up the challenge & assented to what I had refused repeatedly; & took the Republican nomination for Sheriff. I was only a Republican for Reconstruction. I did not vote for the two clauses of the Constitution which were regarded by some almost as a test of loyalty to the Government. I was a Democrat on all fundamental questions. Many Republicans, knowing these things were rather cool towards me & I didn't exactly like a Republican nomination but I could do no better. Had I declined it & run with three candidates the issue between Mr. Millan & myself would have been obscured. I was elected by a majority of 102. The rest of the ticket elected in all Northern Virginia. It made quite a talk. One Republican, running independently, was elected in Loudoun County.

Part of the bargain when I accepted the nomination for Shff. was that a good responsible man would be Deputy. The tax collection & Treasury work was taken from the Shrievalty & given to the newly created Office of Treasurer, so I need do no more of the work than I wished or might seem necessary in an emergency. It was a very convenient arrangement. Things started off well. The Judge, whose appointment I had declined in the Spring didn't exactly relish having me come back at New Years as an elected Republican but he behaved very nicely & the Bar, every man, expressed to me, individually, its satisfaction.

For almost a year there had been a great outbreak of petty stealing. Beside those disposed of by the local magistrates most of the time of the County Court was taken up by larceny cases—usually colored people. Convictions was almost impossible for evidence was necessarily indirect (except when caught in the act) & an alibi could always be shown. It was an irritating condition. A case was up, the Commonwealth's Atty. had put in his evidence, there was not doubt as to the guilt but the smiling lawyer for the Defence with an interesting array of stolid faced darkies was about to demolish the Commonwealth's case when the Judge preemptorily ordered the Shff. to take the prisoner to the jail, give him twenty lashes & release him—and directed the Clerk to enter the necessary order on the Record. And my Deputy carried out the order as was right. He would be wrong to refuse to carry out an order of the Court & so get me in trouble. I had no idea of doing it or allowing it by my deputy. I supposed that a

whipping was a part of the Old Slave code & abrogated—expressly or impliedly in the abolishment of slavery & the adoption of the new Constitution under the Reconstruction acts. I was as ready for the issue & the chances as I was to take the office with its chances two years before. I expected a lively & a noisy time & regarded it with the elation if not the pleasure of the warhorse that sniffeth the battle.

But when I came to look up the law I found it a part of the General Statute, applicable to white & black alike & enforceable by any Judge or magistrate who chose to use it. I immediately dismounted from my “high horse” and wrote Judge Cockerille that I wished to resign & said that my conviction of right & duty will not permit me to continue to hold an office in which I may be required, in person or by Deputy, to flog any human being as a Judicial punishment. The Judge was very kind about it. He had me tight. He could have delayed acceptance & in event of refusal to carry out another flogging sentence fine me for contempt of court a dozen times a day. He wrote me that he was sorry I took that view but had no wish to make it oppressive to me & he would appoint a successor before trying another case, which he did.

You said you wanted the story “with the hair on”. Here it is with natural grown, rat, chignon & applique.

Uncle Frank

¹ Shrievalty: The office, jurisdiction, or term of a Sheriff.

² Franklin’s wife, Caroline M.C. Alvord Sherman (1846–1923).

Franklin Sherman’s letter of resignation as Sheriff of Fairfax County

Ash Grove Va
20 Jan 1871

To

The Honorable the County Court
of Fairfax County Virginia –

I have the honor to tender herewith my resignation as Sheriff of Fairfax County, Va.

My convictions of right and humanity will not permit me to hold an office under which it may be my duty, either in person or by deputy, to flog any human being as judicial punishment.

Franklin Sherman
Sheriff of Fairfax Co.
Virginia

Sherman was a member of the Board of Supervisors in 1871, served as school trustee for over twenty years, and in 1902 became an agent for the Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Loudoun County. When he reached the age of 64, he applied for a pension. By 1907 Franklin was an inch shorter, his hair now iron-gray. He also declared that the tip of his right forefinger was disfigured from a burn received as an infant.¹¹ Some confusion arose with the Bureau of Pensions because his name was given as B. Franklin Sherman when he enlisted. An initial explanation did little to clarify the situation.

Ashgrove, Fx. Co., Va.
17 May, 1907

To the Comr. Of Pensions

Sir:—Replying to yours of the 10th inst. concerning No. 1357944 I would say that on the assumption of the Col. who organized the 10th Mich. Cav. Vol. and of the U.S. mustering officer who mustered me into the service first, that every Franklin was of course a Benjamin Franklin, the letter “B” was prefixed to my name at a first muster-in & I was advised by my Col. to let it stand as it would take time to have it corrected & might make a later date of muster & throw me behind in seniority. I took the advice as a command, & the letter “B” precedes my name on my muster-in & muster-out rolls, on my three Commissions & on my discharge. I was baptized Franklin, & was at the time of my muster-in & have been since my discharge,

Franklin Sherman

This explanation evidently did not satisfy the Commissioner of Pensions. Even after his death, Franklin’s widow was forced to ask her relative Bartholomew Besley to verify her husband’s statement. His recollection differed slightly.

I Bartholomew Besley of Fairfax County, Virginia make the following statement under oath that I was acquainted with Franklin Sherman as early as 1858 and at that time and for some time following he used the letter “B” which I understood to stand for Benjamin but in later years in his business transactions he dropped the letter “B” and signed his name Franklin Sherman. To strengthen the belief in this matter I have receipts signed by him as Agent of the Loudoun Mutual Fire Insurance Co. for the County of Fairfax for assessments for fire insurance as far back as 1902. And another reason I have to make me to testify to the above facts is that I have resided in Fairfax Co. Va. for the past

forty years or more and during that time have not learned of any other person in this county and state by the name of Franklin Sherman and I feel duly qualified to state under oath that B. Franklin Sherman and Franklin Sherman was one and the same person. The only reason that I can assign for the widow inserting the letter "B" in the soldier's name is that it may possibly appear in the marriage certificate or some papers years ago. My age is 77 years old last birthday. My Post Office address Mclean, Fairfax Co. Va.

Bartholomew Besley

Besley also sent another affidavit relating to the marital status of Franklin and Caroline Sherman.

I Bartholomew Besley of Fairfax County, Virginia do make oath of the following statement—that I was acquainted with Franklin Sherman in the year 1858 and became slightly acquainted with Caroline M. C. Alvord in the year 1866 when she was teaching School in this County, that I was not present at their marriage at Greenfield, Mass. Sept. 13, 1867 but the acquaintance was soon thereafter renewed, that I have resided within one half mile of them for the past forty years and am prepared to state under oath that they had lived together as husband and wife continuously up to the time of the soldier's death April 9, 1915, that my age is seventy seven last birthday and that my Post Office address is McLean, Fairfax County, Virginia, route 1.

Bartholomew Besley

Fifty years later¹² his son John wrote of his father:

Back to Father — Just once in my life did I hear him use an expletive. It was on a hot summer day, about 1897. Bretton, "cleaning up", was busily cutting down and grubbing up some vines that Father had succeeded in getting well started on a stretch of bare fence, and Father came running across the field. As he neared us he yelled "Waines! Stop!! What the Devil are you doing there?"

My 10-year old head was well stocked with unspoken language learned on the way to and from School and Sunday School, and this awful lapse of Father's formally shocked and secretly thrilled me. I ran to the house and eagerly told it.

Nobody believed me. I was bluntly told that I was a little liar, that everybody knew that Papa never swore like that; that I was a naughty boy and not to dare ever to tell a wicked story against my father again!

And I really still believe that nobody did believe me, and that they really did believe that I was lying to create an impression and get attention.

The finest thing about Father, however, was that with ten children on a 200 acre farm, in a life during which (he told me in 1915 upon my acquirement of a \$2,500 yearly salary) he never received as much as \$200 in a month, two months in succession; and had never received \$2,500 in any one year; trying to eke out the family living by running the farm and driving all over the countryside writing small insurance policies on little cheap buildings for small commissions, — he never was too busy to answer a small child's question.

He never said, "Don't bother me now, I'm too busy" or any equivalent. Always he would listen to the question accurately, then give it a thoughtful answer. Father was a misplaced man all his life. He should have been a teaching professor of Philosophy & Ethics in a small liberal arts college.

After Franklin Sherman's interment in Arlington National Cemetery,¹³ his son Wells Alvord Sherman assumed the management of the farm and the care of his mother, who lived until 1923. Wells was employed in the Treasury Department. He had married Elsie May Besley, daughter of Bartholomew and Sarah Besley, on May 23, 1895.¹⁴ The ceremony took place at Ash Grove. This generation of Shermans were the next owners of the old homestead. Their son Wells Alvord Sherman, Jr., was born in 1903. Graduating from the University of Wisconsin in 1925, he lived in Texas before returning to Fairfax County in 1937. Wells managed his father's engineering firm after his father died the following year. Sherman served on the Fairfax County school board from 1939 to 1947 and was a lifelong member of the Vienna Presbyterian Church.¹⁵ His son Wilson C. Sherman was living at Ash Grove in 1965 when intensive development began in the Tysons Corner area. Fairfax County planners proposed that a historic zone be established on twenty-five acres, which would include both the restored Ash Grove house and the site of the first county courthouse.¹⁶ Although the attempt to designate a historic zone was not successful, it served to introduce the concept of historic districts to Fairfax County.

Wilson C. Sherman and his family lived at Ash Grove until 1997. When the tract was developed, two acres surrounding the house and 10.3 acres in the flood plain of Court House Spring Branch were conveyed by the builder to the Fairfax County Park Authority. A Master Plan for this park is now being formulated so that the home of the Fairfax and Sherman families will be preserved and protected for future generations.

The Sherman Family

From left to right

Franklin Sherman holding John Harvey (b. December 20, 1887)
Martha Alvord (b. July 31, 1886)
Caroline M.C.A. Sherman, 1846–1923
Dorothea Foote (b. September 9, 1883)
Caroline Baldwin (b. October 6, 1881)
Miriam Fairchild (b. January 8, 1880)
B. Franklin, Jr. (b. November 2, 1877)
Henry Clapp (b. October 16, 1875)
Ruth Brewster (b. April 14, 1872)
Wells Alvord (b. July 19, 1868)

Franklin and Caroline's youngest child, James Morgan, was born two years after this photograph was taken on May 6, 1890. A daughter, Mary Alvord, died in infancy in 1871.

Notes

- ¹ Kenton Kilmer and Donald Sweig, *The Fairfax Family in Fairfax County*. Fairfax, VA: Office of Comprehensive Planning, 1975:43.
- ² Fairfax County Deed Book A3:477. The will of Henry Fairfax was written on March 29, 1847, presumably before he went to Mexico. It is recorded in Fairfax County Will Book V:121.
- ³ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 23, 1847; September 24, 1847.
- ⁴ Fairfax County Deed Book Q3:191.
- ⁵ An unsigned descriptive article "Ash Grove. Residence of Capt. Franklin Sherman." was printed in the *Fairfax Herald* on October 4, 1907. This may have been written by a member of the family, for many similar details about the farm later appeared in Caroline Baldwin Sherman's article, "An Old Virginia Landmark," in the *William and Mary Quarterly* in January 1927.
- ⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 5, 1853.
- ⁷ Deposition of Franklin Sherman, Falls Church Methodist Episcopal Church Claim #12485, Case files for Congressional Cases 1884–1952, Records of the U.S. Court of Claims, Record Group 123, National Archives.
- ⁸ His personal statistics at enlistment were included within the supporting documents of his pension application. Copies are in the Sherman Papers, Cultural Resources Division, Fairfax County Park Authority.
- ⁹ Pension Application #1357944.

¹⁰ *Fairfax Herald*, October 4, 1907.

¹¹ Pension Application.

¹² Letter from John Harvey Sherman to Dorothea Foote Sherman, December 17, 1958.

¹³ Death Certificate of Franklin Sherman. Fairfax County Circuit Court Archives.

¹⁴ Marriage Certificate of Wells Alvord Sherman.

¹⁵ Obituary of Wells Alvord Sherman, Jr. *Washington Star-News*, December 22, 1973.

¹⁶ *Northern Virginia Sun*, February 19, 1965; *Washington Sunday Star*, February 21, 1965; *Washington Post*, March 7, 1965.

In Memorium

James M. Moyer

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